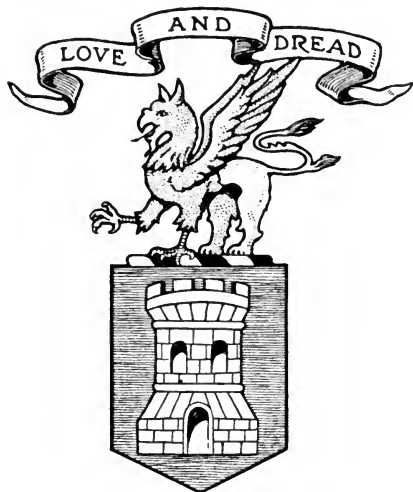




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## THE RELIGIOUS INSTINCT

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THE  
RELIGIOUS INSTINCT

BY THE REV.

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# CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. THE CRY OF THE HOUR . . . . .	I
II. THE RELIGIOUS INSTINCT . . . . .	26
III. THE INTERPRETATION OF INSTINCT . . . . .	53
IV. RESPONSE . . . . .	84
V. PERSONALITY AND MIRACLE . . . . .	110
VI. ESTRANGEMENT . . . . .	139
VII. RECONCILIATION . . . . .	172
VIII. THE PARADOX OF CHRISTIAN HISTORY . . . . .	202
IX. INSTITUTIONAL RELIGION . . . . .	236
X. WANTED—A VENTURE OF FAITH . . . . .	265
APPENDIX . . . . .	279
INDEX . . . . .	291

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# THE RELIGIOUS INSTINCT

## I

### The Cry of the Hour

We must give human nature its fair chance, and accept what it demands, and if human nature call for religion, religion it must have.—FREDERIC HARRISON, *The Creed of a Layman*.

The question of the moment seems to be not so much the continuance of one religious system, or indeed of any religious system, as the continuance of the religious impulse itself.—ERNEST CRAWLEY, *The Tree of Life*.

§ 1. The cry of the hour. § 2. The criterion of novelty. § 3. The implied tribute to religion as a force in life. § 4. The perversion of instinct otherwise sound. § 5. Eclectic character of our own day. § 6. Nineteenth-century influence in the direction of ethics. § 7. Religion and ethics not identical. § 8. Is religion superseded in the recognition of an ethical ideal? § 9. Possible atrophy of the religious instinct. § 10. The cry of the hour man's instinctive warning. § 11. A parallel with the past.

#### § 1. *The Cry of the Hour*

THE air to-day is full of the cry for a new religion. It arises on all sides through the medium of books, reviews, newspapers, the pulpit, the lecture-hall, fiction, and even a thing so remotely didactic as art. Various are the tones that swell the clamour. Many are the standpoints from which it is raised.

The result is a medley which upon the whole fails to rise above a dissatisfaction with religion as at present known and practised amongst us, a dissatisfaction which varies from vague uneasiness to organised denunciation, and yet is perhaps as difficult to precipitate as anything which is held in solution in the social atmosphere at the present time.

This difficulty is due, not to the obscurity of the theme, but to its secret affinities with the atmosphere which it saturates. Religion would indeed seem to represent the fusion-point of all the more important tendencies of the time. On the more purely intellectual side, the generalisations of science and critical investigation are caught up into the clamour. Again, there are those who raise the cry from the standpoint of social justice. Religion, they say, has manifestly failed to find the equation of the individual and the social unit, so essential to the welfare of the state. War, crime, lust, slavery to material needs, the tyranny of unrestricted competition, rear their defiant heads as of old, and Christianity, which professed to furnish a panacea, leaves mankind very much where it was in the great crises of antiquity. Can you wonder, exclaim others, when you look back over the centuries and cast up the actual balance of achievement which stands to the credit of religion? And before we have time to examine the indictment

there press forward those who tell us that religion is *passé*, that its worship and ethos, its literature and ceremonial belong to an age which we cannot revive except as poetry and legend. The once vivid tones, the fierce convictions, the passionate strength have faded out, and the very material is threadbare. How could it continue, they urge, when it was compact of a conception of nature, the world, and man which has been forced by the advance of knowledge into the ineffectual region of myth? And they follow up their advantage by urging how worthy are the new conceptions, the fruits of this advance, to form the substratum of a new religion, and how many and weighty things bequeathed us by poet and reformer justly claim place in the religious synthesis of the future. In contrast to these clearer tones rises the confused murmuring of the multitude who ask what claim on their allegiance a religion can have which is so variously represented and so inwardly divided, and who mingle in their reproaches the curse of clericalism, the impossibility of miracles, and the mistakes of Moses. These, again, are echoed inarticulately by a great multitude of impotent folk, waiting for the moving of the pool, conscious only that something is wrong and that something ought to set it right.

This does not pretend to be an analysis of all the elements voiced in 'the present discontents.'

Moreover it is thrown off rather with the object of securing phonographic fidelity than reasoned discourse. It may serve, however, as a rough example of what will be found on striking through the social atmosphere at any given point. Nor must it be assumed that the phases thus indicated are intended to classify men and women into corresponding groups. As a matter of fact most of these phases are more or less present in every one who is abreast of the times and reflects the spirit of the age. What they would seem to demonstrate is that religion represents the fusion-point at which all the elements in our unrest meet and mingle, forming, as it were, a nebula out of which a new religious cosmos is expected by those who have not lost hope for the future, nor confidence in the forces out of which it is to arise.

### § 2. *The Criterion of Novelty*

Nor is it strange, quite apart from the ferment of the time, that the demand for a new religion should arise just now. We live in an age which will doubtless go down to posterity as *par excellence* the age of invention. The era of discovery, over so far as this planet is concerned, and not yet dawned in the fuller and overwhelming meaning it has in store for us, has left us for the time being applying our knowledge in an increasingly artificial adjustment of the gifts of nature. Already to an amazing

degree modern life consists in such adjustments. The effect of this upon our inner life is two-fold: it indisposes us to believe in the utility of what is old, and it lends a kind of imprimatur to what is new, as though mere novelty had in it something of finality. In fact in every department of life except that of a certain vogue in antiques novelty has come to have for us something of a supreme standard. We are quite satisfied with a Stradivarius or a Doublure; we do not hunger to see Homer in a modern garb, or the Vision of the Guarded Mount plotted out for a Garden City. But that is because the utility of these far-off things lies in their very incapacity to be renewed. It is their function to refresh us by affording relief from our otherwise too furious modernity. In all practical work-a-day matters, however, novelty carries the day. 'The Latest and Best' means that the latest is the best. And is not religion a practical matter? Surely it, if anything, should be kept up to date and abreast of the times! We revise our laws, why not our creeds? We reform our Second Chamber, why not our inner chamber? We lay down new Dreadnoughts, why not lay down new theologies? Besides which, there is the intellectual element in religion. Novelty is the prime necessity of the intellectual life. Witness retired biologists ransacking Genesis, and eminent chemists reconstructing the creed. Should we not

welcome heresy if only as a disinfectant, and promote the 'new synthesis' by way of a brain tonic? Parody apart, however, is there not a very strong case, at a time when all things are becoming new, for a new religion?

§ 3. *The Implied Tribute to Religion as a  
Force in Life*

Now let it be at once conceded that this admission of the novelty-standard into the sphere of religion implies a tremendous tribute to religion. There are those who would do well to take this a little more into account than they do. Too often those who are untouched by the spirit of the age turn a deaf ear to its aspirations as blasphemous, as though the desire for a new work were a disparagement of the author. They would find it at once simpler and more charitable to take the demand for a new religion at its face value. When men want to be up to date in their religion, when they place it alongside automobiles and modern surgery, they show unmistakably that they are in earnest about it. They are certainly not relegating it to the department of antiques. It appeals to them from a different plane from old china and timbered houses. They are not violently moved to realise Ulysses in a silk hat, but their eagerness to clap a silk hat on religion—not to speak in a ceremonial sense—is all in favour of taking religion into the City with

them. And it is this instinct that establishes the fact of most value to the whole question before us, viz. that religion, as popularly conceived, is a present and active force or it is nothing. A religious instinct which could solemnly persuade itself that it had all it needed in the British Museum would be quite hopeless as a motive force. That is where the modern man is right and the reactionary is so hopelessly wrong in judging him. It is this which makes the cry for a new religion so intensely religious. As a matter of fact the most religious feature of the day, on the great scale, is its religious unrest. It is strenuously and obtrusively and even alarmingly religious.

§ 4. *The Perversion of Instinct otherwise sound*

It must be admitted, however, that human nature has a wonderful way of being right and wrong at one and the same time—right as regards its instinct, wrong as regards the direction instinct takes. To cry for light is one thing, to ask for the moon is another. Equality is a sound instinct, but an enforced equality has the root meaning of iniquity. History abounds with instances of instinct heading off on a wrong scent. It is a sound instinct that revolts against slavery; but the substitution of a free labour market has proved a doubtful boon. The instinct of Brotherhood is a family fact; but the guillotine gives it another complexion.

Liberty is the very breath of our nostrils ; but ' unchartered freedom ' wearied even Wordsworth. Instinctively we feel ill-assorted unions to be tragic ; but the remedy may be a sacrament, not a separation order. Two thousand years ago a whole people were crying out for a new religion, and at the same time crucifying their sole chance of such, simply because He claimed to be eternal !

The sounder, then, the instinct, the more need we have to be on our guard against the perverting factor. Now the perverting factor has usually proved to be the temper prevalent at the time any considerable outbreak of instinct has made itself felt. To this temper or mood of the age instinct naturally makes its appeal. It is the matrix in which strong currents of thought and feeling fertilise and shape the elements that await them. If, however, the prevailing temper is unsuitable to carry into effect the real aims of instinct, if the result is only going to be the travesty of a hope, the age had better remain sterile. Probably no sounder instincts ever became articulate than those which preceded the French Revolution ; but the temper of the age, with its narrow logic, its excess of sentiment, and its heritage of injustice, formed about as bad a medium as can be imagined for bringing them to a healthy issue. There the situation was one in which the clearest sighted politician would have intervened in vain ; but



mankind is not always at the mercy of perverting elements, and it is one of the larger aims of education so to prepare the public mind that it shall present a true and proper medium for the development of great inward forces when they emerge.

§ 5. *Eclectic Character of our own Day*

To-day it is as though our civilisation were setting its house in order—engaged in a vast stocking. Original genius is comparatively rare, but the genius of industry was never more plentiful. The ‘literature of power,’ to adopt De Quincey’s distinction, is almost nil, but the literature of research is overwhelming. It is not mighty song or splendid drama, or even the epigrammatic sparkle of the wits that arrests us in literature to-day, but a museum-like order vast and solemn, in which every compartment is neatly and systematically arranged. Had the inhabitants of one of the neighbouring planets paid us a visit a hundred or even fifty years ago, they had been hard put to it to account for our present position as a race, but if such an event were to happen to-day there is scarcely a provincial bookshop but would furnish them with a key to our civilisation. And in this vast accumulation of research the moral life of the race has its place side by side with the social, political, and industrial. Systems are ransacked and compared in setting before us types and varieties

of ethical theory. There is presented to our mental vision a synthesis of all that is best in the thought and feeling of mankind—a sort of moral pantheon, with the gods left out. Here or nowhere, the inquirer is inclined to say, a new religion may be found, or at least the elements from which such may be constructed.

§ 6. *Nineteenth-century Influence in the  
Direction of Ethics*

Before, however, the seeker for a new religion allows himself to be persuaded that he has arrived at the goal of his hopes, he will do well to take into account another element in the temper of the age. The latter half of the nineteenth century was a period of unexampled progress in the appliances of civilisation. Now, morality, it has been well observed, varies almost directly with physical well-being. Just as 'in a decadent race the ethical elements characteristic of the higher religions are the first to disappear,'<sup>1</sup> so, in an age of great material progress there is a large surplus, so to speak, of residual moral deposit, and the estimation of ethics, in accordance with some more or less conventional standard, is proportionately high. The best energies of the nineteenth century were concentrated in ethical idealism, and its most representative critic defined conduct as 'three-

<sup>1</sup> Inge, *Truth and Falsehood in Religion*, p. 38.

fourths of life.' As the century drew to a close religion itself became deeply imbued with this character. On the one hand a fear—whether well-grounded or no does not now concern us to inquire—that the dogmas of religion could not survive the new learning, and, on the other, a suspicion that religion was at best but the mediator of morality and that in bringing the ethical ideal to the birth it had fulfilled its function, combined to float the assumption that it might be quietly and gradually discarded. Even with professedly religious persons religion became subordinated to moral efficiency, and it became no unusual thing to find them rejecting certain tenets and practices on the ground that they had 'no bearing on the practical life.' This intrusion of market values into the domain of religion was only to be expected when conduct registered so high a numerator. The very 'evidences' of religion became saturated with the same estimate, and the triumph of Christianity was dramatically set forth in the circumstances of alleged moral revolution. Those, on the other hand, who attacked Christianity did so not on the score of its failure as a *religion* but—so far as their attack was led from the moral side—because of its alleged inconsistencies, its mixed motive, its slow advance, its pandering to the irregularities of popes and princes. In fact it was on the field of ethics that religion was both assailed and defended.

One consequence of this is that to-day religion is almost indistinguishable from ethics, at any rate in the mind of the man who is accessible to the spirit of the time. The believer defends his faith on the score of its usefulness; the disbeliever maintains that with a clear recognition of the claims of conduct the religious sanction is no longer necessary. The net result of this is to *identify* religion with ethical endeavour.

§ 7. *Religion and Ethics not identical*

Here comes the call for pause. For so far from such an identity being establishable, the two things not only move on different planes, but are fundamentally and essentially different. Indeed, history fails to furnish us with any kind of ratio between them.<sup>1</sup> Religion is a genuine expression of man's inner life. It is as much so as consciousness itself, indeed it is the expression of a certain force of consciousness. The character of this force and the sphere of its operations will occupy us in the following chapters. But the most general perception of its nature is sufficient to differentiate it from

<sup>1</sup> It would seem as though in very early times religion was brought into morality occasionally as a sanction of advance or change, where deviation from practice was strongly disapproved. See Westermarck, *Origin and Development of Moral Ideas*, 1906, i. 159; L. T. Hobhouse, *Morals in Evolution*, 1906, ii. 50 ff.; and Galloway, *Principles of Religious Development*, p. 226.

the static and accidental character of morals. 'The fact that men everywhere and always have developed religion—for there is no evidence that any tribe or race has existed without it—points to the truth that religion must have its roots in human nature. No accident of environment or tenacity of tradition can account for what is constant and persistent.'<sup>1</sup> Morality springs from the relationship between man and man, but religion belongs to man the individual, so that if he existed in complete isolation he would still be in some rudimentary sort religious. It is a truism—almost a platitude—to say that what is universal in experience must belong inalienably to man. Morality, on the other hand, is the reflex of a relationship, arbitrary, accidental, and shifting from point to point along an imaginary line of social convenience largely determined by physical environment. It is mainly the product, other things co-operating, of an increase of physical and mental energy applied in the direction of the extra-self. The profound physical degeneracy of the criminal classes is an instance in reverse order of the physical basis of the other-regarding motive.

Religion, on the other hand, so far from coming under the same class of influences, would seem to be stationary or decadent when the nation is healthy and progressive, when its *mores* are most

<sup>1</sup> Galloway, *Principles of Religious Development*, p. 73.

highly developed, as in the case of Rome under the Empire, or Athens in her great period, or in nineteenth-century England. Indeed, so far are religion and ethics sundered in the existential sense, that there seems no reason why there should not appear a race entirely moral yet entirely non-religious, though the result would be rather that of a man who had lost all pain at the cost of losing all sensation, and Eucken, who contemplates such a possibility, again and again expresses his belief that such a merely static condition of conduct is condemned to sterility.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, while we cannot say that religion varies inversely with physical welfare, physical decadence and moral inertia are certainly not inaccessible to it. The claim of Christ that He 'came to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance' may have a profound significance not only for the decadent individual but for the race also. The confession frequently heard to-day that certain phases of religious appeal 'reach those whom the churches cannot reach' points in this direction, and the history of great preachers and their movements is largely one of the restoration of the socially unfit by means of religion.

The essential difference between morality and religion becomes even more apparent when we observe their coincidences and interactions. Höff-

<sup>1</sup> *Kampf um einen geistigen Lebensinhalt*, 1907, pp. 277-8.

ding<sup>1</sup> declares that at the lowest stage known to us religion has properly no ethical significance; but this he qualifies a little further on by pointing out that nature worship has its ethics so far as it makes definite demands on its adherents. These demands are often such as to cripple the best resources of the race, as in the case of human sacrifices on a great scale. Here morality, which is socially protective, is impeded by that from which it derives its sanction. Among comparatively modern peoples religion has shown itself capable of being held quite apart from conduct, though probably the worship of Apollo among the Greeks was less representative of religion than that of Dionysos,<sup>2</sup> where, however, the ethical influence was distinctly unfavourable. No doubt allowance has to be made for our totally different Western standpoint, but it seems impossible to doubt that the great religions of Assyria and Babylonia inaugurated practices to which those nations owed their decline. These and similar facts not infrequently furnish weapons for those who attack religion from the utilitarian point of view, but such an attack is eminently unscientific. They might as well arraign life itself on some similar count. Every great force is subject to the human conditions

<sup>1</sup> *Religionsphilosophie*, pp. 291-3.

<sup>2</sup> Miss J. E. Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, ch. iii.; L. R. Farnell, *Greece and Babylonia*, ch. vi.

in which it works. And the more vital the force the more disastrous are the results of perversion. *Corruptio optimi pessima*. These anti-social phases of the religious consciousness seem to indicate that religion, like nature, has an end of its own, and if it cannot find its due medium it is as indifferent to immediate ethical results as nature herself. Both follow a vaster curve of fulfilment than anything comprehended in ethical progress.

It must not, however, be inferred that contact between the religious and the moral consciousness is always anti-social; very far from it. When religion is free to make a real advance, when the fire of the spiritual life burns brightly, the process reacts favourably on the moral consciousness, quickening man's sense of duty and enabling him to fulfil his obligations. The rise of Christianity is a good illustration of this. Neither is it to be denied that advance in ethical feeling may exert a profound influence on the religious consciousness. In the far past such advance is primarily responsible for the elevation of 'gods' from purely natural powers to beings with a moral character. It is not within Christianity only that the doing of the ethical will has revealed the nature of the religious sanction. Good illustrations of this process are to be found in the religions of Persia, Greece, and Israel, in all of which we can trace clearly how the advance of moral perceptions brought about a



purification of the naturalistic elements of the earlier faith.<sup>1</sup> Even in quite recent Christianity the strong feeling traceable largely to Coleridge, that 'what is wrong in man cannot possibly be right in God' has been fruitful in a nobler spiritual faith. So far we must admit the indebtedness of religion to ethical idealism, but that is another thing altogether from saying that the two are identical, or that the function of religion can be fulfilled in the production of a certain class of conduct.

§ 8. *Is Religion superseded in the Recognition  
of an Ethical Ideal?*

It does not appear that there is nearly the unanimity as to the ethical ideal that those wish to make out who would superannuate religion in favour of a sort of Committee of Public Safety. When the Hooligan of Europe ran amuck among the nations a vigorous moral law was at the back of those who played police, and St. Helena supplied a fairly complete refutation, on pragmatist lines, of the philosophy of the superman. But when the next Napoleon appears—and Professor Reich used to tell us the phenomenon was as calculable as a comet—will civilisation show the same united front? Those leaders who urge us from ethical platforms to leave 'the debatable land' of religion,

<sup>1</sup> Galloway, *Principles of Religious Development*, ch. viii.

'where strife is keen and tenure hazardous, and dwell together in quieter and safer parts'—a sort of return to the pastoral age, with Dr. Stanton Coit as chief shepherd—must not reckon too confidently on an undisturbed agreement in the moral ideal. The near future may furnish us with as bitter a strife as to the *type* of morality as the immediate past has done as to its basis. The Pan-pipes may not discourse such sweet music after all when the education problem has become an affair between the Shavians and the Neosentimentalists. At the time the ethical societies began to exert influence the pastoral prospect was bright enough and Eucken had not arisen to trouble it with his pale menace of sterility. There was an immense concourse of opinion that, however much we might differ as to theology, there could be no possible dispute as to the type of conduct we desired to produce. Thus we find Mill declaring that there could be no better guide for the formation of character than 'so to live that Christ might approve our life.'<sup>1</sup> The great social and industrial movements of the last century, from Chartism at the one end to the Labour Church at the other, were all founded on the tacit agreement in the desirableness of altruism. Any suggestion to erase the name of Christ from Mill's dictum and substitute that of Napoleon would have been regarded as the raving

<sup>1</sup> J. S. Mill, *Essays on Theism*, iii.

of a lunatic. And yet it is precisely such a suggestion that is brought before us to-day in all philosophic seriousness by the increasing vogue of Nietzsche. A rude discord invades the vale of harmony and into the midst of the lute-players stalks an egoism so relentless that nothing less than a 'transvaluation of all values' on which their present civilisation rests would seem to await them if they fail to meet its challenge. The mere agreement as to a type of conduct—which is all that ethics means—is impotent and defenceless before the 'will to power.' It cannot even show that its unanimous altruism has not all along been retarding the best interests of a strong race!

Is it so certain after all that 'the function of religion has disappeared with the recognition of the ethical ideal'?<sup>1</sup> Is it not possible that just as formerly the sanction of religion was invoked on behalf of change, so its protection may presently be sought against change? The spectacle of the shepherds and shepherdesses of South Place invoking the shade of a departed faith against the monster of philosophic crime would be ludicrous but for the tragic possibility that the spirit thus invoked may also have retired—and become inaccessible! In plain terms, that the power to believe may no longer be a human attribute, and the static substitute for religion have created a spiritual

<sup>1</sup> Salter, *Ethical Religion*, p. 49.

paralysis in which the dynamic of faith is powerless to act.<sup>1</sup>

§ 9. *Possible Atrophy of the Religious Instinct*

This is the real danger that menaces us to-day. And the difficulty in inducing men to recognise it is an additional evidence of its approach. That our unanimous altruism should break down is a comparatively small matter, and after all it is not so very evident that our altruism with its Bond Street at one end and workhouse at the other amounts to so very much; nor is a recrudescence of the jungle to be taken so much to heart; there have been Nietzsches in the past and the human process has survived them; the deep danger is that men and women now living should lose possession of a force which, little understood though it be, can alone carry *them* onward. And in the face of this danger the urgent need is that we should try to understand what religion *is*; what it consists in, apart from the passing moral fashions that foist themselves upon it. We have to contemplate the possibility that religion may exist, so to speak, in and for itself; that it may claim us far more than we it; that so far from being a process in the manufacture of morality, it may be a force like nature

<sup>1</sup> 'The question of the moment, in fact, seems to be not so much the continuance of one religious system, or indeed of any religious system, as the continuance of the religious impulse itself.'—Ernest Crawley, *The Tree of Life*, p. 123.

herself, and we ourselves the raw material to be shaped for ends passing the vision of ethical science to foresee.

§ 10. *The Cry of the Hour Man's Instinctive  
Warning*

It is to this end that the religious instinct is at work in all of us to-day to an extent to which there is no parallel in modern times. The age is big with expectation. The voice which stirs in the masses of men, though it have 'no language but a cry,' is not going to gain expression through any kind of moral esperanto or 'great religious synthesis' foretold in some quarters. Its language of rejoicing, of praise, of penitence, and hope is latent in the spiritual consciousness of the race. The thing that lies there flees the manufacturer and, while ever new, abhors the facile test of novelty. As true language, that of Dante or Chaucer, rises as the fine flower of a nation's life, pulsing with Spring, its ducts long charged with the welling sap of myriad activities, toilings, fightings, failures, premonitions of destiny and imperial desire, so is the expression of the voice within. As language presses upward into song and senate and law, in rude and rapturous defiance of utilities, bearing with it reminiscent forms archaic and gloriously useless, a syntax full of anomalies and a spelling which is sheer despair, so is the language of the soul. It comes of the

clamour of the unquenchable longings of the heart. It emerges because of a consciousness personal and immediate that 'cannot be holden of death.' Its 'novelty' stands only in its originality. It is effectually new precisely because it is unchangeably old. It is from everlasting to everlasting. It moves indifferent to the intellectual fashions of the hour. It does not disdain them, but it refuses to be gauged by them. It addresses man as the Psalmist addressed his Maker: 'They all fade as doth a garment; as a vesture shall they be changed, but *thou* are the same.' All the passion and fever and even apathy of modern life is the herald of a language which shall achieve the full volume of song only when its desire is satisfied: 'My soul is athirst for God, for the living God.'

### § II. *A Parallel with the Past*

Those who, near two thousand years ago, attached themselves to Christ were very much in the position of those who are seeking a new religion to-day. They looked for a 'kingdom,' for a condition of things which they somehow felt *ought* to be, nay, for which they had long been prepared. They felt that the old kingdom, with its legal righteousness and its externalised authority, was exhausted. And in the words that were 'spirit and life' their human instinct discerned a response to which they could respond in turn. Nevertheless, the New Ideal

was going to prove at first almost as baffling as the system in which they had starved and waited. For in its revulsion from this the soul-hunger within them had conjured up a strange semi-political mirage which had no counterpart in reality. There is the pathos of human expectancy, which, abiding alone, cannot bring forth fruit. Yet, as the bud, so dissimilar from the open-hearted rapture of the summer, contains within its folds the joy it prophesies, so erring human hope can break in glory. The Master of men knew this, and instead of negating their illusive dream, He gradually built into its decaying wrack the sculpture of the City of God. The Truth was so much better than the vision as even the vision was better than the fact !

So, in all soul-progress there are three great processes : first, revolt from what is merely static and stifling, inspired by the native longing of the soul ; then a period of illusion and disillusion, of visions that vanish at approach, of wild and vivid impossibilities projected on the wilderness of the actual, a condition which lasts till the soul has found its way through its own profitless and yielding novelties to the elementary instinct that speaks within. Then and only then is the desire for what is new for ever satisfied by that elemental originality which men have called Eternal. In the process of this satisfaction the soul will encounter much that

it once rejected transfigured into new meaning and living form. Things old as well as new will be brought out of the treasury, for here the old is not older than the new nor is the new newer than the old. To the disciples, on their first approach to Christ, their dream-kingdom seemed far newer—in far more striking contrast to the rejected system—than the elements of Fatherhood and the personal transformation of life which He had to bestow. So far were these things from constituting a 'new religion' that there was nothing novel about them, and it simply depends upon the sense in which we use the word whether we pronounce Jesus the least original or the most original Teacher the world has ever seen. Indeed, on the plane of *teaching* merely, it is questionable whether what He had to give would ever have secured the response of the human instinct. As a matter of fact 'teaching' utterly fails to convey His actual achievement. The effect produced was rather a luminous evidence, a force of soul upon soul, a sort of Divine maieutic, giving birth to the original life long sterile in the heart, creating the spiritual man in the realm occupied hitherto by materialised conceptions.

To-day multitudes of men and women own to hardly any other conviction than that religion, as they know it, neither satisfies their spiritual need nor controls their social conditions. They worship they know not what, yet they do worship, and their



very desire for the ' new religious synthesis ' of their dream is a subconscious act of faith and adoration. They trust a ruling goodness, they worship a supreme ideal, though neither be manifest to their vision. They are misunderstood and mishandled by those who should best be able to help them. The churches offer them a creed while as yet they do not believe, and the unchurches cast them ethics while their sole concern is with faith. To tell them that their dream is a delusion, while in a sense true, would be so false to truth, as almost to revive the atmosphere in which Christ was crucified. Rather let them inquire into the actual ascertainable meaning of religion. We do not gain our earthly prizes by shouting, but by the quiet eye and the steady hand. Emotion and sentiment have their place, but what we need at the present time is not more of these but the direction and disciplining of what we have. It is open to all to ascertain what religion is, and what is the original impulse which flows through all forms of it. The knowledge will not be gained without concentration, yet it requires no extraordinary learning, only such care and shrewdness as every man and woman who maintains a footing in the struggle of life has to give.

## II

### The Religious Instinct

The universality of religious ideas, and their independent evolution among different primitive races, prove that their source must be deep-seated, and not superficial, and that religion expresses some *eternal fact*.—HERBERT SPENCER, *Principles of Sociology*.

He who understands but one religion can no more understand that religion than he who understands but one language can understand that language.—TYLOR, *Primitive Culture*.

- § 1. The scientific study of religion, causes of its delay. § 2. Two elements common to every known form of religion : (1) Consciousness, or expectancy. § 3. (2) The instinct of approach. § 4. This instinct increases instead of diminishing with intellectual advance. § 5. The two elements of religion fundamental and ultimate. § 6. Religion definable in terms of its highest concepts. § 7. Religion not many but one. § 8. The problem of classification.

#### § 1. *The Scientific Study of Religion, Causes of its Delay*

ON all sides there are evidences that the nature of religion is not yet realised. Would there be such attacks upon it, such methods of defence, so many different versions of it, and such a restless craving for yet more, if its nature were understood? Nor is it wonderful that there should be this lack of understanding when we reflect that barely fifty

years have elapsed since the scientific study of religion began. This must not be understood to mean that previous to fifty years ago people did not know what religion was. They knew it in the same sense that life was known previous to biology. In the sound old sense of having 'got religion' it has been 'known' throughout the ages. In the sense of being able to 'place' religion among life's forces, of being able to say in what exactly it consists, and to what it tends, man has had everything to learn. Even to-day there are some who regard the matter as too sacred to be discussed, and resolutely turn from any attempt to translate the spiritual idiom into the vernacular of encyclopædic science. Such a refusal must not be mistaken for mere prejudice; on the contrary, it has to be reckoned in as one of the most striking and suggestive of religious phenomena.

Until comparatively recent times the study of religion was confined to a few words used in connection with it in half a dozen languages. This meant that the inquirer could not penetrate beyond the literary races of mankind. He could form no idea of the religion of primitive man, while even within the narrow limits of etymology he was at the mercy of scholarship often arbitrary and misleading. Another cause of delay in reaching anything like a universal notion of religion arose out of a false science of mind, which set out by assuming a

religious 'faculty' as sharply defined as the process of digestion. Through many a long year of philosophic speculation men proceeded to identify this 'faculty' with first one and then another of the equally arbitrary 'departments' of the mind—the will, the feelings, and the intellect. So the religious 'faculty' kept on changing its 'seat' with the frequency of a fortunate nobleman desirous of variety, now, with Hume and Schleiermacher, residing in the emotions, now, with Kant, in the will, now, with Fichte and Hegel, in the intelligence. It is small wonder that such an itinerary should have set shrewd persons lamenting, with Luthardt, the futility of philosophy when applied to religion,<sup>1</sup> or proclaiming, with Sir Leslie Stephen, the vanity of submitting religion to rational estimates.<sup>2</sup> The explanation, however, is exceedingly simple. It consists in the fact that this class of speculation was not favourable to the formation of an adequate interpretation of the religious consciousness.

It is obviously impossible in a passing reference to do more than indicate some of the difficulties that beset the student of religion until recent times. Strange and even grotesque as some of his attempts appear to us to-day, these false issues reveal a struggle almost as absorbing in its fascination as the history of religion itself. Indeed the growth of

<sup>1</sup> *Fundamental Truths of Christianity*, Lecture I.

<sup>2</sup> *An Agnostic's Apology*, p. 335 ff.

the science of religion is an integral part of that history. For only as man came resolutely to question his own consciousness, and the manifold expressions of instinct in custom and belief, did he draw nearer to the fulfilment of his age-long quest. As all science produces not only knowledge but development of faculty, so the very quest after spiritual origins has touched the heart to finer issues.

As a matter of fact the science of religion awaited a true science of history and of the human mind, and while we may be very far at the present day from claiming finality in either one or the other, we have certainly attained of recent years something of a truer method, as well as a vaster field of observation. On the one hand, modern advances in psychology have all been in the direction of emphasising the unit of the mind. We now know that neither thought, emotion, nor will is to be found in a state of abstraction apart from the rest. Consequently the idea of religion as a 'faculty' peculiar to any one of these ceases to hamper the discussion. Whatever meaning religion may turn out to have for us, we may be sure it will mean something in regard to the *whole* man as contrasted with any specialised part of him. To have got this clear is an immense gain. And, side by side with this *aufklärung* in psychology has come a vast increase in the material for inquiry, consisting not only of evidence gathered from existing primitive races,

Seek 'stage'

but of those 'varieties of religious experience' which, a quarter of a century ago, or even less, lay in entire neglect. The labours of men like the late Professor James and Dr. Starbuck have most opportunely supplemented those of the anthropologist. Again, a more scientific conception of the principle of Continuity than even obtained when anthropology came into being has corrected some of the earlier efforts to treat religion by a comparative method, and is steadily gaining ground. This—the true conception of Continuity—is a matter of the first importance. As, however, the subject is too technical to introduce into the text of a work that aims at being of general interest, the author has placed in an appendix some principles which he has himself found useful in the comparative study of religion in the hope they may prove of service to those who desire to be further acquainted with the 'evolution' of religion.

The task immediately before us is at once wider and narrower than the science of religion itself. Wider, because made in the interests of a practical need; narrower, because in those interests it is limited to the ascertainment of the least common measure of what religion can be held to stand for. In other words, the issue before us is, Do we need a new religion? and before we can answer that question, we must know what religion is, *semper, et ubique, et ab omnibus*.

§ 2. *Two Elements common to every known Form of Religion : (I) Consciousness, or Expectancy*

From the immense mass of facts which research has placed at our disposal it seems evident that there are two elements common to every known form of religion, and without the presence of which it is difficult to conceive of religion at all. The first of these is the idea of something other than man. The statement is purposely put crudely in order to present as simple a mental concept as possible. Thus, the term 'idea' is not used as expressing, necessarily, the result of a conscious intellectual process. Neither shall we, at this stage, complicate the question by asking whether this 'something' is 'supernatural'—whatever that much-abused term may convey to our minds. Our aim is rather, in the present chapter at all events, to keep as free as possible from philosophical constructions and confine ourselves to the simple facts. And in this elementary sense what the facts reveal in every form of religion is a 'something' viewed by man as existing apart from himself. It may be a stone, a tree, a cloud, a ghost, a winged bull, a 'magnified and non-natural man,' an abstraction like the 'Humanity' of Comte, or a concretion like the reputed survival of Mrs. Eddy. All that science bids us affirm with confidence is that it is 'something' viewed apart from the self which is conscious of it.

The last characteristic is by far the most important, and to this it may be objected: (a) that in some savage forms of religion no 'objective' existence of the 'something' seems to be experienced; also (b) that at least one 'higher' religion, Buddhism, would appear to be entirely without any such sense of 'something' external to itself. Let us briefly consider these objections in turn. With regard to (a) the case in point is that of the savage tribes of Central Australia. Here Tylor<sup>1</sup> is probably justified in excluding what may properly be termed a 'god' from the form of religion presented, but it is to be observed that he allows a consciousness of 'spirits' of a separate existence from those who are conscious of them. In this he is supported by the great work of Spencer and Gillen,<sup>2</sup> and by Howitt, perhaps our best authority on the Australian natives of the south-east, himself an initiated member of several tribes, who speaks confidently of the 'real existence' of the objects of their religious consciousness.<sup>3</sup> In fact it is not until at a comparatively late date in civilisation that man begins to suspect that what he has hitherto conceived as external may be the subtile reflex of his own consciousness.

As regards (b) it is true that in Southern Buddhism,

<sup>1</sup> *Primitive Culture*, i. 417 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, pp. 146, 163, 228; *The Northern Tribes, etc.*, pp. 33 ff., 177-9, 494.

<sup>3</sup> *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xiii. 310, 459.



which must be carefully distinguished from Northern Buddhism, or Bodhism, there is no mention of 'God' as a creator or ruler of the world. But then it must be remembered that Southern Buddhism was a reaction from the excessive 'objectivity' of Brahmanism, apart from which, indeed, it is unintelligible. We should not call the extreme section of the Reformers atheistic because in their recoil from a debased Catholicism they broke down roods and cast out images. It is always questionable how far Southern Buddhism can be regarded as a religion rather than a unique 'cultus,' but certainly the Existence which it postulates is wider than the individual, while 'gods' and 'devas' have their part in the traditional and popular forms of it.<sup>1</sup>

So far, then, it seems to be clear that the 'something' which, under various forms, is the object of the religious consciousness, is universally conceived as being apart from the self which is conscious of it. But it must not be thought that this 'apartness' means that it is a *material* object and nothing more. Probably the old idea of idolatry in which many of us were brought up, viz. that the image or fetish worshipped is the 'god,' is responsible for the false notion that all idolatry is a kind of materialism. Nothing could be further from the truth, nor at the same time more subversive of the claims of spiritual religion. One of the many benefits arising out of

<sup>1</sup> Max Müller, *Selected Essays*, ii. 297.

the science of religion has been the exposure of this fallacy. No one any longer holds that the fetish was regarded by its votary as a material fetish and nothing more. Fetishism has been well defined by Mr. Crawley as 'an application of animism to curious objects.'<sup>1</sup> Dr. Jevons tells us that 'the material object, whatever it may be, to which the term fetish is applied has always been regarded as the habitation of a spiritual being.'<sup>2</sup> Professor Tylor's narrative of the discovery of a fetish by an African negro may well serve as typical of the religious consciousness at its dawn. This negro was once going out on an important errand, when, crossing his threshold, he trod on a stone and hurt himself. 'Ha! ha!' exclaimed he, 'art thou there?' So he took the stone and 'it helped him through his undertakings for days.'<sup>3</sup> Is the mentality conveyed in this native story so very obscure? It must be clearly distinguished from *inference*. In the negro's mind there was no sort of 'inference' at work. What really was there was a sub-conscious *expectation* which the 'accidental' encounter with the stone suddenly fulfilled. The stone was related to the negro's instinctive expectation of a 'something' outside himself, just as the hammer which we use is related to our belief in our own force.

<sup>1</sup> *Tree of Life*, p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> *Introduction to the Study of Comparative Religion*, p. 109.

<sup>3</sup> *Primitive Culture*, ii. 158.

As we discover our own force by exerting it on or through an object, so primitive man discovers his consciousness of something outside his 'self' by chance and often impressive encounters with material objects. To *him* the objects are everything; to us, in analysing the process, they take a relatively negligible position, and the interest centres in the *expectation* which lies at the back of this primitive consciousness.

This is the truly arresting thing in the whole history of the religious consciousness. The vague, mysterious 'something' is not suggested by 'nature'; it is read into nature. Man brings it with him. Never did the saying that 'the eye sees what it brings with it the power of seeing' receive more luminous illustration than in the case of man's earliest religious guesses. Now, how does he come by this inherent expectation? That is the question that lies at the root of religious phenomena. Here we have a mystery out of all proportion to its manifestations. Nor does there seem any probability that science will get beneath or behind this mystery except as it is rendered intelligible by the light which the developed religious consciousness casts upon it.

### § 3. (2) *The Instinct of Approach*

The second element common to every known form of religion is the desire to be at one with this

object of man's consciousness. Here, again, let us try to get as close as we can to the most rudimentary form which this desire takes. Often we shall find it assuming the most childish attempts at propitiation, and, of course, springing from a total misconception of the facts of nature. To take a classical example; a rock, dislodged by natural agencies from its parent crag, is hurled at the feet of the dwellers below. They at once imagine a giant concealed behind the crag, who is either bent on their destruction or inclined to spare them. In either case the imaginary giant becomes an object of conciliation. The choicest offerings are laid at the foot of the mysterious crag, which in course of time attains a high degree of ceremonial importance.

Such an instance, crude as it is, is not to be dismissed as a mere delusion. Strictly speaking, it is not a case of delusion at all. The savage instinctively knows that movement implies a mover. The principle of causation is as much alive in him as it is in his twentieth-century successor, the only difference being that the man of science has a sufficiently gigantic 'giant.' Just as the 'principle of the rationality of the universe' is a pure assumption with the scientist, so in the savage, 'causation' is an instinct. It is not even an inference from his own bodily volitions. He knows nothing of inferences. This instinct of causation, this dawn of

the scientific intelligence, however, is not sufficient to explain the savage's subsequent action. Neither is the addition of the instinct of self-preservation. Indeed, the latter, in the light of what actually takes place, only intensifies our curiosity as to what is at the back of both. Our own experience of self-preservation would lead us to expect him to avoid the menacing crag. Instead of this he draws near to it and cultivates its acquaintance! And this, not in defiance of the self-preserving instinct, but in compliance with it. That is to say, he deems himself safe, not in escaping the effect, but in approaching the cause! This is the arresting feature of his proceeding. It is begging the question, it is begging every question at issue, to say that this is a childish folly which man gets the better of as he comes to understand nature. It is exactly such superior assumptions that have delayed our knowledge of man and the springs of his action. Just as in the former case—of Tylor's negro—the astounding thing is that man should have been *looking for* the fetish which caused him to exclaim: 'Ha! ha! art thou there?' so here the astounding thing is that he should *approach* danger and not run away from it. To explain this there is needed an instinct mighty enough to sway that of self-preservation—an *instinct of approach*.

This approach is not the mere fascination of danger, nor the infatuation which the striking

snake possesses for its prey. There is nothing of the hypnotic about it. The emotions in the case would probably yield on analysis the same odd combination of awe and familiarity which, according to Tylor, is characteristic of all fetish-religion.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the 'approach' obtains equally in freedom from danger, in periods of hope and desire and emulation and victory. It is not difficult to discern in it the rudiments of confidence and trust, and yet it is not more complex than the instinct which brings the dog to his master or the seal to the light that dazzles it.

In this 'approach' we see the genesis of all sacrifice, propitiatory rites, libations, oblation of first-fruits, sacrificial meals, totemistic ceremonies—in fact the whole *active* side of religion. And thus the 'approach' is significant of a desire for union with the object of the religious consciousness. This is no more than obvious, for certainly man would not approach his god did he not desire to do so. The additional fact that he usually carries with him some material thing expresses in gesture-language, while he is as yet incapable of 'ordering his speech by reason of darkness' the intensity of the desire that actuates him.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Primitive Culture*, ii. 171, 178.

<sup>2</sup> Thus the jungle-dwellers of Chota Nagpur, who sacrifice fowls for the purpose of conciliating the powers that send jungle-fever, have no name for these powers, and are incapable of giving an intelligible account of their action. But of the

§ 4. *This Instinct increases instead of diminishing  
with Intellectual Advance*

Nor are we concerned with primitive man alone when seeking the meaning of this extraordinary instinct. Far from it. The desire for union does not tend to disappear with the intellectual advance of the race. It increases. Neither prudence nor salvation has alone motivated it, but the mere sense of imperfection, and the failure to come up to a supposed required standard.<sup>1</sup> So large a proportion of the entire field of the religious consciousness does this desire occupy that Dr. Frazer<sup>2</sup> understands 'by religion itself a propitiation or conciliation of

reality of the powers they have no doubt, nor of the fact that their action in sacrificing is pleasing to them. The relation of this gesture-language to prayer and literate worship is indicated in the words of the prophet: 'Take with you *words* and turn unto the Lord your God.' With regard to the relation between this desire for union, and the varying motives which actuate it, the reader is referred to the 'Principles' in the Appendix. We cannot read the commercialised motives of a later age into primitive custom. The whole subject is commended to the reader's careful attention.

<sup>1</sup> The author is not thinking solely of the Christian doctrine of sin, but of what obtains in quite obscure tribes. See Maclean, *Compendium of Kaffir Laws*, 107; Colquhoun, *Among the Shans*, p. 76; Crawley, *The Mystic Rose*, pp. 142 ff., 484; Spencer and Gillen, 238, 502. It is extraordinary to find Huxley saying that 'amongst the lowest savages religion is a mere belief in ghostlike entities who may be propitiated or scared away, but no cult can be said to exist, and in this stage theology is wholly independent of ethics'!—*Science and Hebrew Tradition*, p. 346.

<sup>2</sup> *The Golden Bough*, i. 63 ff.

powers superior to man, which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life. . . . Religion everywhere assumes the world to be directed by conscious agents who may be turned from their purpose by persuasion.' It is open to question whether Dr. Frazer in this definition does not stop short of the most elementary instinct and therefore fails to include peoples like the tribes of South-East Australia, the Kurnai, the Zulus, the Dahomans, and the Fijians, who are without propitiation, though manifesting a kind of 'approach.'<sup>1</sup> Mr. Crawley, while admitting the above to be 'the best definition of religion yet given,'<sup>2</sup> criticises it on the score of its failure to embrace Buddhism, Positivism, and—what is very remarkable—Christianity! The difficulty of constructing any definition of religion capable of including Southern Buddhism has already been noticed. Positivism labours under the disadvantage of being a religion 'made' not 'born,' and obviously we cannot look to find in it what was purposely excluded, and yet there is surely a mystic sense in which the Positivist 'approaches' his Humanity, and in which the long roll of personal sacrifices which he treasures in his hagiology<sup>3</sup> are propitia-

<sup>1</sup> A. Lang, *The Making of Religion*, p. 42; Fison and Howitt, *Kamilaroi and Kurnai*, p. 255; Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, i. 417 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *The Tree of Life*, p. 186.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. a fine passage in Mr. Frederic Harrison's *Creed of a Layman*, p. 92.



tions in a noble and illuminating sense. Be this, however, as it may, it certainly is amazing that a critic of Mr. Crawley's standing should affirm that 'in the theory of Christian theology there is no conciliation or propitiation of God.'<sup>1</sup> One had thought that the 'theory of Christian theology' had been formed for four centuries at least by 'Cur Deus Homo'!<sup>2</sup>

§ 5. *The Two Elements in Religion Fundamental and Ultimate*

The theological value, however, of the above ideas lies outside our present purview, from which we have only turned a moment for the purpose of inquiring into the universality of propitiation. The conclusion to which we are led is this: that while propitiation is too narrow a term, in the strict sense, to warrant inclusion in a general definition of religion, yet what we have called the instinct of approach—of which propitiation is one expression—must be accepted as the source of the whole *active* religious phenomena of the race. Here we have something as fundamental as the instincts of causation and self-preservation. If the former of these—that of causation—has proved the basis of all intellectual advance, and the latter—the instinct of self-preservation—the mainspring of all

<sup>1</sup> *The Tree of Life*, p. 186.

<sup>2</sup> And, subsequently, Butler, *The Analogy*, pt. ii. ch. v.

man's social organisation, why should not an instinct so universal, so ineradicable, as this of 'approach' prove as valid in its own direction as its kindred instincts have done in theirs?

To the question, then, How does man come by his inherent expectancy? we have to add this other question: How does he come by his instinct of approach? And these together present a point beyond which present analysis has to acknowledge it cannot go. In other words, we have reached the goal of our quest, so far, as any rate, as to be furnished with a provisional definition of what religion means, and has meant always, everywhere, and to all men. In the consciousness of an Object, and the desire to approach this Object we reach the precincts of that 'eternal fact' to which Spencer traced the universality of religious ideas. These two instincts, derived from man's primitive consciousness, embrace all known developments of that consciousness, and are adequate to all subsequent experience. It is true, we cannot reduce our definition to one *genus proximum*. As well as the consciousness we find the desire, and both must be registered in the definition of religion. This, however, is no objection, since the same holds good of almost all things that are definable. A triangle must be said to have three sides as well as three angles. Logic must be defined as an art as well as a science. In the entire intellectual world, knowledge and practice, *ἐπιστημὴ*

and *τεκνη*, have to be taken into account in expressing ultimate meanings. The very fact that 'consciousness' and 'desire,' expectation and approach, answer roughly to knowledge and practice in the realm of intellectual concepts, would seem significant. As a matter of fact there is no reason for the supposition, so dear to the heart of monism, that we must arrive in our ultimate concepts at indivisible unity. We have already seen how the study of religion was delayed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by attempts to unify it in a single concept of belief, knowledge, or perception. The days are gone when Teichmüller<sup>1</sup> could inveigh successfully against the old theological definition, *Religio modus cognoscendi et colendi Deum*, on the ground that conjunctions were out of place in definition! The progress of knowledge relieves us of such etiquette.

At the same time, while these two instincts which form the data of our definition are clearly separable in thought, it may be questioned whether they ever exist apart. Directly the 'expectancy' is fulfilled the machinery of 'approach,' so to speak, is set in motion. To all that meets, touches, kindles the consciousness there is an immediate response, and the two continue and develop side by side throughout the whole history of the religious consciousness. We are therefore in a position to

<sup>1</sup> *Religionsphilosophie*, 1886, p. 16.

define religion as consisting in the consciousness of God, and the desire for union with Him.

§ 6. *Religion definable in Terms of its Highest Concepts*

Here, however, we are met by the objection that if we decline to read into primitive ideas those of a later and decadent period, we have no right to apply to primitive ideas a terminology belonging to recent times and associated with facts and ideas of which the primitive mind knew nothing—in a word, that the term ‘God,’ and other terms in use in the ‘higher’ religions, cannot be used when speaking of primitive instincts. Grant Allen, and other writers of his school, contend that we ought to reverse the process, and break up all advanced religious terminology into its anthropological constituents. This objection arises out of that fallacious idea of evolution which conceives development as taking place *in a line of direct advance*, instead of the dispersive progress on which all thinkers are now agreed.<sup>1</sup> Paradoxical as it may seem to the reader who is unacquainted with the modern dispersive conception of evolution, it is nevertheless true that there is no reason for supposing that we are nearer the *genesis* of religion in primitive man than we are in, say, Isaiah or

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix; also Jevons, *Introduction to the Study of Comparative Religion* (Home University Library), ch. i.

Dante. The principle of evolution obliges us to believe that whatever has been developed was always present in the germ. When we speak of the evolution of religion we do not mean that one form of religion has been produced from another, Christianity from Judaism, Judaism from some Semetic form, and so on, in a direct series. That kind of thing may pass muster in the public parks, but no man of average intelligence regards evolution as such an exceedingly simple affair. What we mean by the evolution of religion is precisely what we mean by evolution in biology, viz. the dispersive progress of a number of varieties springing from one germinal centre. This being the case there is no reason whatever for expressing all forms of religion in the most primitive terms.<sup>1</sup> On the contrary, there is every reason for expressing them in terms with which we are most familiar to-day. What would happen if men of science reduced their terminology to the primitive incoherencies of the savage? Every natural law which owes its enunciation to the principle of the 'rationality of the universe' would have to go unstated. Science would be at an end. No more can the soul admit a terminological arrest of experience. The fetish

<sup>1</sup> 'It would be as absurd to say that the idea of religion is to be confined to that which religion shows itself to be amongst savages, as to say that the idea of language is to be confined to that which is revealed in the speech of an infant.'—Edward Caird, *Evolution in Religion*, i. 54.

of the savage is as much a part of the completer experience of the soul, as the instinct that movement implies a mover is active in the discoveries of Newton and Kelvin. We need not hesitate, then, to employ the terms ' God ' and ' Union with God ' as covering and including all forms of consciousness and desire under which religion presents or ever has presented itself.

### § 7. *Religion not many but one*

Most religious classification, as we shall have occasion to point out later on, is arbitrary. To the unprejudiced observer, Central Australians, Kaffirs, Polynesians, Jews, Brahmins, Catholics, Puritans—all present one and the same generic character. In respect of the data on which our definition is built up, organised and stereotyped systems are in essence one with those which are amorphous and undogmatic. In this respect the religion which best preserves and transmits the original impulse is all one with what Sabatier used to call ' the detrimental types.' In the ' Ha ! ha ! art thou there ? ' of the primitive savage, we hear the cry of the mystic : ' I saw Thee, and I sought for Thee ; I saw Thee, and I wanted Thee.' In the Covenants which mark the Fourth Shinto Ritual we are listening to language made familiar to us by a thousand recitations : ' I will be their

God, and they shall be my people.' In the agonised cry : ' Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul ? ' <sup>1</sup> we hear voiced those mute heroisms which poured their blood upon hill-altars, and sought at the mouth of rivers the eloquence of death. In the purificatory rites of obscure tribes we recognise the dawn of penitence, and the shrill and terrible herald who stood beside the Advent stream. The desire of the Psalmist is the Desire of Nations : ' My soul is athirst for God, for the Living God ; when shall I come to appear before God ? ' The philosopher, with all tribes of the earth and all past time before him, rises from his survey with the same confession : ' The essence of religion is that reference of a man's life to a world-governing power, which seeks to grow into a living union with it.' <sup>2</sup> Or, again, ' religion involves a relation, and indeed a conscious relation to a being or beings whom we designate divine.' <sup>3</sup> Or, again, ' All religion is based ultimately on the sense of an affinity between the soul and God.' <sup>4</sup> Or, once more, ' The religious phenomenon, studied as an inner fact, and apart from ecclesiastical and theological complications, has shown itself to consist everywhere, and at all its stages, in the consciousness which individuals have of an intercourse between

<sup>1</sup> Micah, vi. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Pfleiderer, *Religionsphilosophie*, p. 327, third edition.

<sup>3</sup> Edward Caird, *Evolution in Religion*, i. 53.

<sup>4</sup> Chandler, *Faith and Experience*, p. 1.

themselves and higher powers with which they feel themselves to be related.'<sup>1</sup> Even the philosopher who in the excess of his sensitiveness to the homely language of religious experience, tried to write in a new dialect, finds himself summing up the conclusions of a lifetime thus : ' The essence of religion is the strong and earnest direction of the emotions and desires towards an ideal object, recognised as of the highest excellence, and as rightfully paramount over all selfish objects of desire.'<sup>2</sup> What is this,—what are all these—in the two essential elements they embody, but a confirmation of the result we have reached, that religion is a consciousness of God and desire for union with him ?

### § 8. *The Problem of Classification*

Before, however, we can draw any practical conclusions from this definition, we are faced by another difficulty. The principle of continuity obliges us to admit that the varieties of the religious consciousness do not present an unbroken progressive series ; but if this is so, how are they to be co-ordinated and classified ? And if we cannot classify them, and arrange them in some sort of ascending series, how is it possible to learn to what they point ? We have already postulated that it

<sup>1</sup> William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 465.

<sup>2</sup> Mill, *Three Essays*, p. 104.



requires the developed organism to explain the germ from which it grew. What are we going to take as our type of maturity in religion? Dr. Figgis, in his recent volume,<sup>1</sup> acknowledges this to be 'one of the main difficulties that face the apologist. For while religion in general is seen to be a necessary element in the make up of human life, the same observation by no means tells in favour of any religion in particular.' Obviously, we cannot solve the problem by selecting some one form of religion unless we have strong self-evident ground for such selection, and an attitude of severe detachment will be found necessary to resist the claims of some form for which we have a personal attachment. If we are to go entirely on experience, then the satisfaction of the fetish-worshipper presents just as 'mature' a standard as the religion of the Christian. Nor can we establish some one form of religion on the ground of its displaying a more complex content, a fuller or 'higher' harmony, or, on pragmatist lines, a more efficient working, since all these criteria are strictly relative to the life of the people among whom such a form of religion appears.

Again, we are constantly likely to be misled by the very different values which our own predilections have had for other ages and peoples. For example, when we see the polytheism of the Vedas turning into pantheism, we are predisposed

<sup>1</sup> *Civilisation at the Cross Roads*, pp. 208-9.

to view the change as an advance towards a purer form of religion, and we should be likely to select the latter phase as 'maturer' than the former. As a matter of fact, however, while the change we observe is an advance towards *unity*, it is not an advance in the line of religion at all, but an intellectual tendency towards unification which proceeds by deleting the essential personal element of religious relationship. Almost precisely the same phenomenon appears to-day in the hold which some modern forms of transcendentalism are gaining over the minds of many, giving rise in this country to the series of phenomena grouped under the 'New Theology.' Or, again, bearing in mind the distinction drawn in the first chapter between the moral and the religious consciousness, we might be disposed to regard the rise of Hebrew Prophetism as illustrating a decline from the religious to the ethical plane, whereas the 'socialism' of Hosea and Amos, and the political policy of the first Isaiah were simply examples in practical affairs of a keener perception of the relationship between the soul and God. The prophets were a real advance upon the decadent phase of Hebrew religion; and the same applies to the religion of Zarathustra, and the organisation of the Olympian pantheon in Greece. Such are some instances of the difficulty of discovering a true standard of religious progress.

The problem has been variously attempted by students of Comparative Religion, but without any convincing success. Thus Dorner, in his work on the Philosophy of Religion,<sup>1</sup> views the several forms in their relation to the metaphysics of the subject. But this is to hark back to the old false science of mind, as well as to court the danger of making the experience fit the theory. Dr. Figgis throws out a valuable hint, when he says, 'We may well proceed to ask ourselves whether the Catholic Church does not enshrine the central experience of the race'<sup>2</sup>—a suggestion, however, which he does not proceed to develop, preferring to base the finality of Christianity on ethical grounds.<sup>3</sup> Professor Galloway sees in the development of religion the outcome of man's striving after ampler self-fulfilment, and seems to build up his criteria in accord with 'a deepened self-consciousness, and a growth into a richer and more harmonious personality.'<sup>4</sup> Is not this, however, rather an epicurean standard, and one which would appeal more to the ethos of Weimar than Antioch or Iona? Besides, it throws us back on the difficult question in what a 'rich and harmonious life' really consists. Placing side by side, as Sienkiewicz does in his brilliant novel, *Petronius and Peter*, which of us,

<sup>1</sup> *Grundriss der Religionsphilosophie*, pp. 199 ff., 249 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Civilisation at the Cross Roads*, p. 208.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 209.

<sup>4</sup> *Principles of Religious Development*, pp. 66-8.

judging by the above standard, would hesitate a moment to pronounce Petronius the more religious man of the two? And yet we cannot help feeling that the fisherman, with all his poverty and hardship, his limited powers and constant menace of death, was in possession of a 'way of life' incomparably superior to that of the *Arbiter Elegantiarum*. A standard which depends upon another standard is not a very satisfactory aid in judging so fundamental a thing as religion. There would seem to be no connection in which it is so difficult to stand apart from ourselves and from the conclusions which we wish to establish, nor in which we are so bewildered by the relativity of human things as in this matter of a criterion for the religious consciousness.

Limiting our inquiry to the field of the religious consciousness itself, and refusing to admit any kind of external standard, whether of metaphysics or ethics or personal preference, may we not trust the solution of the difficulty to the method of interpretation? That is to say, assuming the religious consciousness to be a fact, we have to ask which of the many types of it most clearly and fully interprets the two elements which we have seen to be common to all its forms. This inquiry will occupy us in the next chapter.

### III

## The Interpretation of Instinct

The thoughts and principles of modern Christianity are attached to intellectual clues which run back through far pre-Christian ages to the very origin of civilisation, perhaps even of human existence.—*TYLOR, Primitive Culture.*

In some religions the process of development goes on, while in others it is arrested at a certain point, and they gradually decay and become effete. The law of continuity is not broken, and we can study the causes which have sapped the vitality of a faith once vigorous; but development in the true sense of the word has ceased. And where this happens we shall generally find that the harmony of the elements in the religious relation has been sacrificed, and that the religious consciousness has gone astray by ignoring or perverting some essential element, or by the exaggeration of one element at the expense of the rest, and so deterioration has ensued.—*GALLOWAY, Principles of Religious Development.*

- § 1. The first essential of an interpretive type of religion. § 2. The interpretive nature of Christianity obscured by the monopolist school. § 3. Reaction against the monopolist school. § 4. This reaction corrected by later scholarship. § 5. Parallelisms in the light of Jewish 'types.' § 6. True inference from these parallelisms—the selective function of Christianity. § 7. This selective function marks out Christianity as the conserver of the original impulse of religion. § 8. The conservation of the original impulse supplies the key to the principle of classification. § 9. The claim of Christianity on our further consideration.

#### § 1. *The First Essential of an Interpretive Type of Religion*

THE first essential of an interpretive type of religion is that it should be inclusive. A religion which

does not share the character and aspirations of other religions obviously cannot shed any light upon them. Now the striking fact about the great religions of the world, with one exception, is their exclusiveness. The enmity with which they regard each other's claims—more often the entire ignorance they are in as to those claims—is significant, not only of a severe detachment, but of a self-sufficiency which, as it has nothing to learn, has nothing to impart. The one exception to this exclusiveness would seem to be Christianity.

§ 2. *The Interpretive Nature of Christianity  
obscured by the Monopolist School*

Among certain Christians the idea is still prevalent, though happily less in evidence than it used to be, that Christianity is a thing altogether apart, not a shining and heaven touched peak in a mountain chain, having its roots in the human earth, and giving order and proportion to all surrounding it, but a thing detached and solitary as a star, remote in all save light. For convenience' sake we may call persons of this persuasion the Monopolist School. Unfortunately they have had a large share in the religious training of the present generation. Hence the prevalence of the notion in Christian circles that religion is Christianity and nothing else, and that all other forms of the religious consciousness are 'superstitions.' This

notion, which, at first blush, looks like a source of enthusiasm rivalling that of Islam, has had the very opposite effect on Christian propaganda. Far worse, however, than its direct hindrance to the spread of Christianity among other races has been the confusion into which it has thrown the understanding of religion generally. Tylor has an admirable saying that 'he who understands but one religion can no more understand that religion than he who knows but one language can understand that language' <sup>1</sup> The kind of mechanical, Heaven-given thing, the *Deus ex machinâ*, that Christianity has been represented and believed to be by the Monopolist School was only too likely to confirm selfish and ignorant persons in their indolence and superiority, and render them both indifferent to their 'heathen' brethren, and incapable of handling them when duty bade them seek them out. It was also the worst preparation imaginable for the reception of the discoveries of the anthropologist.

This attitude finds its refutation in Christianity itself. To divorce Christianity from the race is to divorce it from Christ. The spirit in which He taught was not that of antagonism to other forms of the religious consciousness, but of affinity with them. By Him 'faith'—the very mainspring of the response He sought—was found to be existing in men already, irrespective of their inclusion in

<sup>1</sup> *Primitive Culture*, i. 24.

the Jewish Covenant.<sup>1</sup> In fact, He found in 'paganism' a 'greater faith,' a readier and more complete response than He found in Israel. His parables, the vehicles of His teaching, always assume something in common between the Kingdom and those outside it. That of the leaven, perhaps the most characteristic of them all, resembles the Kingdom to an organic growth which produces its result by means of affinities already existing in the material into which it finds its way. That is to say, the Mission of Christ and His religion was, according to His own account, to select, assimilate, and transform the spiritual truth already in the human consciousness. And thus Christianity, as this process, is reminiscent of the consciousness and desire of all nations. As Dr. Tylor says, 'The thoughts and principles of modern Christianity are attached to intellectual clues which run back through far pre-Christian ages to the very origin of civilisation, perhaps even of human existence.'<sup>2</sup>

The medium through which this assimilation was immediately effected was, it need hardly be said, Judaism. The Jewish religion, reaching back through the ages, had gathered into its aspiration, ethos, and worship all that was spiritually permanent in Egyptian, Chaldean, Zoroastrian, and other 'systems' with which it had been brought into


<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. viii. 10; St. Luke vii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Primitive Culture*, i. 421; cf. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, iii. 230-1.



contact. By a train of circumstances as remarkable as anything in the history of mankind, the genius of the Jewish people became the crucible into which was flung one by one the leading religious ideas of the race, to emerge, purified and enriched, by the spiritual alchemy of Christ. The words by which Israel heralded her hope—‘He shall sit as a purifier and refiner of silver’—were profoundly true, and form an example of the race-consciousness of prophecy. We shall have occasion presently to inquire in what exactly consists humanity’s debt to this medium of transmission. For the present we are only concerned with making it clear, despite the lingering fallacy of the Monopolist School, that ages before Christ was in the world the world was in Christ. ✓

Although the Monopolist School has long been discredited by the leaders of Christian thought<sup>1</sup>—at any rate in this country—it must be confessed that the generality of Christians still lag behind their leaders, trammelled by an invincible parochialism.<sup>2</sup> So long as they persist in regarding

<sup>1</sup> The words of the present Bishop of Winchester may be quoted as expressing the more modern (as well as more primitive) attitude: ‘While with surprising clearness Christ centres man upon Himself, and distinguishes Himself from all who ever came before Him, or should come after Him, He yet regarded His own Mission as the climax in a long appeal from God to man, a summing up and gathering together of all man’s broken recollections of the eternal order.’—*Lux Mundi*. 

<sup>2</sup> It is extraordinary to find a great missionary body like the

their religion as a monopoly, and disregard the earnest appeals that are put forward from time to time to endow chairs of Comparative Religion in their colleges, so long will Christianity be impeded, both at home, with those familiar with the results of ethnical research, and abroad, with races who will never be persuaded that their religions are wholly false.

It was mainly due to the indifference and indolence of popular Christianity that the anthropologist, who should have been hailed as a guide, arrived as a Nemesis. It is useless to disguise the fact that during the last few decades anthropology, instead of furnishing evidence for a really constructive idea of religion, has supplied the most deadly weapon of attack on Christianity. However rash science may have been in some of its conclusions, it must be remembered that it was the Christian who had the training of the anthropologist. Had the Christian been equal to his task, had he been instinct with the spirit

Church of England apparently so indifferent to the assistance of science in the understanding of other religions. In 1892 the late Professor Max Müller made an urgent appeal for the study of comparative religion in Missionary Colleges, and Professor Tylor (*Primitive Culture*, i. 24) anticipates a time 'when it will be thought as unreasonable for a scientific student of theology not to have a competent acquaintance with the principles of the religions of the lower races, as for a physiologist to look with the contempt of fifty years ago on evidence derived from the lower forms of life.' Where, in the present day, are the fruits of such appeals as these ?

of his Master, a very different record from the above might have been made. As it was, his extreme remoteness from the religion he professed brought about the reaction the effects of which we are reaping to-day. It will be as well to glance at this reaction with a view to making clear what the significance of anthropology as regards Christianity really is.

### § 3. *Reaction against the Monopolist School*

Following in the wake of the anthropologist has been an army of miscellaneous writers busy discrediting Christianity on the score of its resemblances to earlier forms of religion. The monopolist said, Christianity has nothing to do with paganism; these writers retort, Christianity is nothing but paganism. And if there is anything that can give point to the cry for a new religion it is the misgiving that after all Christianity is only a survival of religions effete and powerless.

A typical example of this reaction is afforded by a couple of passages in a work by Mr. Richard Bagot—typical, because they occur, not in a technical work on Comparative Religion, but in the course of a most interesting and valuable study of modern Italy.<sup>1</sup> In the first of these passages Mr. Bagot is writing of the bonfires on the slopes of Como on the Eve of St. John. He says:

<sup>1</sup> *My Italian Year*, 'Sketches in the Comasco.'

‘These Beltane or Baal-fires are, of course, lighted in honour of the Christian Saint, not of the pagan deity. The truth is that anyone who is sufficiently interested in these matters to investigate their origins will find, possibly to his dismay, that there is not a single festival of the church which is not directly derived from pre-Christian religious observances. . . . It can never be sufficiently observed that in the Madonnas and Saints, in the ritual and observances of Catholicism we are merely confronted by old acquaintances wearing masks more suitable to the present needs of society.’

Again, comparing Christmas and Holy Week in Rome, Mr. Bagot writes :

‘Perhaps one would feel more impressed were it possible to forget the fact that almost precisely similar scenes of grief and mourning, joy and triumph, were enacted year after year in honour of deified men who lived and died and rose again from the dead centuries before the tragedy of Calvary. The student of ancient rituals connected with Adonis-worship and the cult of Osiris—to name only two out of the many examples of god-men who were deliberately slain by proxy in order that they might be born again—is well aware how largely Christianity has borrowed from these rituals. He may, perhaps, not illogically consider that in the mournful ceremonies of the *Settimana Santa* and the exultant offices of the *Pasqua di Risurrezione* he is, after all, merely assisting at an evolved form of Nature-worship, and the relevancy of this consideration will not be diminished by the knowledge that he is in Rome,

whither all great cults of the East were transplanted and absorbed by Latin Christianity.'

It is strange indeed that the discrimination which characterises so much of the volume from which these passages are taken should apparently fail to distinguish between a parallelism and a plagiarism! Mr. Bagot accepts the mere coincidence of a parallelism as a proof that Christianity was 'borrowed' from paganism! If, in the work of some previous writer on Italy we came across a passage closely resembling one in Mr. Bagot's book, would he consider us justified in suggesting that he had 'borrowed' it? Most of his parallelisms, however, are not parallelisms at all. Between the supposed death and resurrection of Adonis or Osiris and the death and resurrection of Christ there is not a particle of parallel. The one shammed death—or so Mr. Bagot tells us—in order to be born, the other actually died in order to give his life a ransom for many. 'The ritual and observances of Catholicism,' Mr. Bagot tells us, 'are simply old acquaintances wearing masks.' Are they? When were the 'masks' put on? When did the Christians of the Roman Empire clothe the worship of Jove with the 'mask' of Jehovah? He suggests that at Easter we may be assisting at an evolved form of Nature-worship (the capital 'N' is Mr. Bagot's). Certainly we *may* be, just as the man who is born on the first of

April *may* be a fool. The fact that the Resurrection is celebrated at the season when Eostre used to be worshipped no more makes the Resurrection a species of nature-worship than the date of a man's birth affects his brain. 'There is not a single festival of the Church,' Mr. Bagot tells us, 'that is not *directly derived* from pre-Christian religious observances.' It is the italicised words that we challenge. It will go hard with Mr. Bagot or any one else to point out *one* 'festival of the Church' that *is* 'directly derived' from a 'pre-Christian religious observance.' He tells us that we shall discover this alleged indebtedness of the Church to 'pre-Christian religious observances' 'to our dismay.' *Why* 'to our dismay'? Why, because in this way Mr. Bagot thinks, and in a subtle way induces his readers to think with him, that this 'direct derivation' demolishes the claims of Christianity. Elsewhere in the same volume Mr. Bagot disclaims 'the responsibility of disturbing a faith that is genuine.' It is a responsibility, and Mr. Bagot incurs it. He and those who write like him treat Christianity as they dare not treat their neighbours in the presence of witnesses. Numbers of people who have not the opportunity of being up to date in modern research read such travesties of fact as the above quotations instance, and their faith, 'genuine' enough till it had the misfortune to encounter such literature, *is* 'disturbed.' Others

will only see in Mr. Bagot's misrepresentations a proof of his extreme remoteness from a scientific view of Christianity.

#### § 4. *This Reaction corrected by Later Scholarship*

It is a relief to turn to an authority like Professor Farnell, whose freedom from bias on the one side or the other gives his strictures all the more weight. 'We must guard,' he says,<sup>1</sup> '*against accepting too rashly the fact of resemblance for proof of actual origin.* Nor must we ignore the truth that two religions may be vitally different in effect, while they use the same materials of thought and belief. The subject,' he adds, 'demands great knowledge and critical insight.' To these words should be added those of a writer in the *Church Quarterly*.<sup>2</sup>

'Any research which tends to throw light on the character of the rivals of early Hebrew and Christian systems is to be welcomed. Neither the cause of truth nor of religion will suffer ultimately from these inquiries. Even where erroneous there is always a stimulus to truth in error if it is honest. But a deliberate and violent dislocation of religious history to discredit Christianity is as silly as it is irresponsible.'

That there are true parallelisms between Christianity and what are sometimes called 'the ethnic faiths' is freely admitted, and we shall

<sup>1</sup> *Evolution in Religion*, p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> April 1908, art. 'Adonis, Baal, Astarte.'

have occasion to recall some of the more striking of them presently, but what they point to is the existence of a variety of similar religious conceptions and experiences in the race. We must again revert to the position taken by all scientific study of religion to-day,<sup>1</sup> that continuity is represented not by a single line of advance, but by a sheaf of lines radiating from a common point. In the interpenetration of such 'lines' there is sure to be much resemblance and repetition, and it is to its peculiar richness in these resemblances that Christianity owes its unique position as an interpretive type.

§ 5. *Parallelisms in the Light of Jewish 'Types'*

The odd thing is that these resemblances should produce surprise in Christians themselves. The very first Christian apologetic—the Epistle to the Hebrews—commended Christianity on the ground of the parallelisms between the office and function of Christ and those developments of the religious consciousness in the midst of which He appeared! And in the religious teaching of a few generations ago these Jewish 'types' were a familiar feature. Now, what are all the parallelisms which anthropology brings to light but extensions of the same idea? Why should parallelisms in the more familiar sense be received as strengthening the claims of Christianity, and the modern ones be

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix.



regarded askance? To put it in a slightly different way, Would the case for Christianity, so to speak, be strengthened if Christ had found *no* response when He came? if not a single disciple had been attracted to Him by a magnetic current that had its 'pole' equally in the disciple as in the Teacher? if He had pronounced His message in an idiom entirely foreign? To conceive such a thing is to conceive an appeal unintelligible and ineffective in its very uniqueness. Then, *pari passu*, must not the discovery that the 'types' of Christianity are not confined to *one* religion, but extend throughout the entire religious consciousness of the race, be significant of a vaster confirmation? Must not all that the anthropologist discovers in this direction 'declare eloquently that there are spiritual needs common to the whole of mankind, that the need of an Incarnate Saviour, of a Triune God, of a Sacrament of Communion, are fundamental aspirations of the human race crying imperiously for satisfaction, and that He by Whom they can alone be satisfied completely is in no mere phrase but in very truth the "desire of all nations"?'<sup>1</sup>

§ 6. *True Inference from these Parallelisms—the Selective Function of Christianity*

To hazard a paradox, the striking thing about the resemblances between Christianity and other

<sup>1</sup> *Church Times*, August 28, 1903.

religions is their differences. Any child can seize the resemblance between Napoleon and ordinary men; it is the differences that fascinate the student. In our revolt from the exaggerated individualism of the last century we tend to fix upon the uniformities rather than the diversities of human nature, and so Mr. Bagot and his colleagues find the way prepared for their facile task. It had gone ill with science if the same 'fatal facility' had marked its steps through the ages. For science the interest of phenomena has centred in diversity, and this is certainly the case in regard to Comparative Religion. And the more we examine the points of contact between Christianity and other religions the more convinced do we become of a purposiveness in the divergencies. It is not so much a rational or prescriptive purpose, as, so to speak, a functional one. Its working seems analogous to the way in which the organism retains the life-promoting elements of food, and rejects those unsuited to growth and energy. This it is that differentiates Christianity from mere comprehensiveness or eclecticism, and gives it its interpretive office among the religions of the world.

To take a few examples: on comparing the incarnations of Ra in the Pharaohs with the Incarnation of God in Christ, we recognise that the former are entirely wanting in the character-element. They tell us nothing whatever of the

object of the religious consciousness. So far were they from furthering man's knowledge and satisfying his desire that they might as well never have entered into his conception. Goodness, holiness of life, mercy, justice, virtue—none of these qualities, which have become part of the object of the Christian consciousness, were attaching to the divinities of the ancient world. The doctrine of the Avatâras represents Vishnu as more frequently incarnating himself in animals than in human form. There is a certain air of wild prophecy about them all, as of theology gone mad, a weird anticipation that sees everything in the chiaroscuro of nightmare, of which we can only say that there must have been somewhat there to give rise to such immense distortion, but *what* it is, or what intelligible message it should have for men are questions which haunt us like the wonder of a whirling dream.

Take the similar subject of Parthenogenesis. The only genuine tradition of virgin-birth outside that of Christianity is that of the Buddha. Oddly enough, we are indebted for this to a Father of the Christian Church! It is St. Jerome<sup>1</sup> who set the rumour afloat that the Buddha was born from a virgin's side. May his soul rest in peace! When all things are put straight he will have little responsibility for it, because it happened in this

<sup>1</sup> *Contra Jovinianum*, lib. i. § 22.

way: there was in his day a certain Persian impostor called Terebinthus; this aspirant for religious distinction took the name of 'Buddha'—doubtless having learned that there were many Buddhas—and, having also heard of the Incarnation, he claimed *for himself*, not for his more easterly prototype, the honours of incarnation. Whether St. Jerome, in relating that the 'Buddha' was born from a virgin's side, meant the Buddha Terebinthus, or Gautama Buddha still remains a problem, but there can be no doubt that the reputed parthenogenesis of the latter was reflected back on Indian tradition through the claim of Terebinthus.<sup>1</sup> The interesting thing for the Christian of the present day is that good St. Jerome does not seem to have been at all agitated by this claim of Terebinthus or his predecessor. He certainly did not dream of discrediting on account of it the Virgin-Birth of Christ. He simply attributed to the Persian *Samanas*, or ascetics, a belief in their Buddha's virgin-birth.

All Buddha tradition is a most intricate study, and probably nowhere is the 'critical insight' which Professor Farnell desiderates so urgently needed. While on the subject of Terebinthus one other instance may be recorded of the confusion that arises from the study of resemblances. In France

<sup>1</sup> See the chapter on 'Virgin-Birth' in Dr. St. Clair Tisdal's recent work, *Christianity and Other Faiths* (Robert Scott, 1912).

M. Edmond Schura, and M. Jacolliot have attributed Christ's choice of twelve Apostles to the 'fact' that Buddha had twelve disciples. The real 'fact' is that it was this same *Persian* Buddha Terebinthus who, about A.D. 230, designedly imitated Christ by selecting twelve followers! At no time in his history were Gautema's followers limited to twelve. Quite recently the author heard the above misstatement pass unchallenged in a well-known literary circle in England.<sup>1</sup>

Chinese instances of parthenogenesis, on which so much stress has been laid by popular writers in this country, are admittedly open to allegorical interpretation,<sup>2</sup> and so variously recorded are they<sup>3</sup> that it is difficult to determine how far literal virgin-birth is ever to be understood. For some mixed nature of the record has to be allowed for in accepting the Egyptian tradition of Horus being born of the 'virgin Isis.'<sup>4</sup> Supposing, however,

<sup>1</sup> The great bulk of comparisons between the Buddha and Christ is absolutely worthless. Edmond Schura's *Krishna et Orpheus*, the English translation of which has a great vogue, is entirely discredited by Orientalists. M. Jacolliot, whose work *La Bible dans l'Inde et la Vie de Jézeus Christna* has been exposed by Professor de Harlez in his *Vàdisme, Brahmanisme, et Christianisme*, is another writer whose 'brilliant generalisations' are not worth the paper on which they are written.

<sup>2</sup> See Jennings's *Shi King*, p. 294.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Giles, Professor of Chinese at Oxford, *Pagan and Christian Parallels*, p. 46; also *Religions of Ancient China*, p. 21; also Sergius Georgievski, *The Peruviiy Period Kitayskoy Istoriy*, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> See Maspero, *The Dawn of Civilisation*, pp. 131, 132.

that the *idea* of virgin-birth is present, and that the allegories warrant us in admitting that its possibility has been a conception latent in the race, we seem unable to get further. It is absolutely vain to search these traditions for the character-element that is the prominent aspect in the Christian dogma, while the profound reasons which underlie that dogma and the belief on which it rests, and which connect it up with the whole body of Christian doctrine, are wholly to seek on the 'ethnic births.'

The Christian doctrine of the Trinity has been accorded a widely various geographical origin. It should perhaps be premised that the doctrine in question is that of a Divine Unity existing in three hypostasies. A fuller as well as simpler account will be found in a document commonly called the Creed of Athanasius. The English public is still informed that this doctrine is derived from India, and that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is an adaptation of the Hindû Trimûrti, i.e. Brahma, Vishna, and Siva. All possibility, however, of such being the case has been dispelled by two authorities of European distinction, the Italian, Angelo di Gubernatus, who informs us that 'this late Brahminical, or rather Purânic conception was undoubtedly imitated from the Christian doctrine disfigured,'<sup>1</sup> and the German Professor, de Harlez, who quotes the above statement with

<sup>1</sup> *Enciclopedia indica*, p. 363.

approval, and adds: 'This Indian adoption or invention does not go further back than the beginning of the Middle Ages. The word "Trimûrti" is quite modern, and is little used.'<sup>1</sup> So much for the alleged Indian origin of the doctrine of the Trinity. More frequently, however, our informants take us to Egypt as the source of the doctrine, and claim to discover it in the ancient triads. These triads are groups or families of three separate deities, usually father, mother, and son. The best known is that consisting of Osiris, Isis, and Horus. These Triads, according to Maspero,<sup>2</sup> were feudal groups, not unlike William of Normandy and his earls and barons in our own feudal period. Each was jealous of the other, and, so far from presenting any unified conception, were not even one group of three, but were divided into numerous groups. As a matter of fact, the only resemblance between them and the Christian doctrine of the Trinity—and it is very remote—is that of plurality. But the plurality of the Egyptian triads is the plurality of polytheism in general, to which they really belong, a plurality differing—we may literally say, *toto cælo*—from that of Three Persons in One God as revealed by Christ and set forth in the Athanasian document.

Here, again, however, once the distinction is

<sup>1</sup> *Vàdisme, Brahmanisme, et Christianisme*, p. 112.

<sup>2</sup> *The Dawn of Civilisation*, pp. 151, 152.

made clear, the interesting thing is that the religious consciousness should in its chaotic state reveal an instinct for plurality in the Godhead. This is the real 'resemblance,' and it is an instinct of which we could make nothing were it not for its interpretation in Christianity.

Again, in Zoroastrianism as well as in the older and younger Edda we find the idea of a resurrection both individual and general, and in the former that of a 'consummation of all things' so dear to the heart of St. Paul. 'Death,' said Chuang-tse in China about 330 B.C., 'is the commencement of life.' And the custom, well-nigh universal in certain stages of civilisation,<sup>1</sup> of doubling up the dead body into the position in which the child lies in the mother's womb, may probably denote a belief in birth into another state of existence. None of these indications of belief in a future state, however, supply one word of enlightenment as to what that state may be. They do not 'bring life and immortality to *light*.' Now the *condition* of life after death is of far more importance to man than the mere fact of 'survival.' It is the destination that makes the difference to the journey. And as to the destination of life the whole of the non-Christian religions are wholly silent.

We have already seen how clear is the instinct-

<sup>1</sup> This has been discovered in Europe as well as in pre-dynastic Egypt.



language of the race on the need of an atonement of some kind. The instinct of approach is nearly always propitiatory, except in some two or three tribes. In many cases, in fact in most, the sacrificial meal is associated with the sacrifice. This subject is a very large one. An interesting account of all forms of propitiation is given by Mr. Ernest Crawley, together with much valuable discrimination.<sup>1</sup> In most cases the sacrificial meal was not a part of the ritual of 'approach,' but belonged to the termination of the sacrificial ceremonial. It was, says Dr. Jevons,<sup>2</sup> 'the reconciliation, the expression of the conviction that friendly relations had been restored.' Again and again we have been told of late that this meal, 'consisting as it did not only in eating with the god but in eating the god' (offered) was the origin of the Christian Sacrifice of the Altar and its accompanying Sacrament of the Real Presence of the Lord. This is, historically, an exceedingly interesting instance of the tendency to rash generalisation. It is doubtful whether what is crudely called 'eating the god' has ever had any existence outside Mexico, and we are indebted for the account of it as it was practised in Mexico, when that country was first opened to civilisation, to the soldiers and priests of Spain, who would no doubt read into what they

<sup>1</sup> *The Tree of Life*, pp. 94 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *The Idea of God in Early Religions*, pp. 74 ff.

saw the central Christian Mysteries. Here, again, however, the value of the ethnic rites and beliefs lies in the *instinctive idea*. While there is nothing whatever to warrant us in supposing the Christian Sacrifice and Sacrament to be *survivals* of precedent rites, there is everything to arrest the attention in the instinctive feeling after such as a necessary part of the 'approach.'

Such are a few of the more typical cases of resemblances and differences. Now the question which the inquirer needs to put along the whole range of such is, what has governed the selective function of Christianity? How comes it that with the universal *ideas* of incarnation, parthenogenesis, plurality in deity, immortality, physical restoration, sacramental life, Christianity alone presents us with an intelligent and coherent *life* of such centred in Christ? We account for the resemblances by freely admitting that all religion is one; but what accounts for the startling distinction of Christianity?

'Similarity of pattern between two plates, the one empty, the other full, does not fill the empty plate.'<sup>1</sup>

How comes it that while mythology is full of 'saviours' or 'deliverers' like Baldr, Lemenek, Arthur, Osiris, or Merodach, their 'deliverance' is entirely referred to the future,<sup>2</sup> as the embodiment

<sup>1</sup> *The Splendour of a Great Hope*, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> There is hardly a phase of ethnic religion where the student does not need to be on his guard against false resemblances; e.g. it has been represented, in regard to a famous Advent hymn,

of a hope, and is never, like the Advent of Christ, a *παρουσία*, a personal deliverance in the *present*, consummated in the future? Is the reason why such a distinction is not immediately perceived due to the fact that we do not understand what the Advent of Christ really signifies? Are we so untaught, or are we so careless about the religion which at any rate we formally profess that we do not know at a glance the difference between it and religious customs and beliefs resuscitated in our current literature? How is it, again, that while Attis and Tammuz, among Western Asiatics, and, in the Aryan world, Jupiter, Zeus, and Dyaus, with all their immense train of divine persons, and the actions ascribed to them, are plainly allegories of the life of nature, there is not a vestige of such allegory about the origins of Christianity? That the phenomena and functions of nature should have been deified in poetry and should have given rise to cults and 'mysteries'<sup>1</sup> is not surprising, for there is an 'analogy of religion to the constitution and course of nature,' but it is surprising that the quick, keen, intellectual life amongst which the 'mystery-religions' arose should have proved so

that the chants in the worship of Isis concluded with the refrain, 'Lo! He comes!' In reality this is a punctuation-mark, 'it comes,' i.e. the end. See Budge, *History of Egypt*, ii. 79, 80.

<sup>1</sup> See 'St. Paul and the Mystery-Religions,' by Professor H. A. A. Kennedy, in the *Expositor*, 1912, especially the paper in the November number, 'The Central Conception of the Mystery-Religions.'

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inadequate for the task nature set them! How is it that while 'knowing God . . . they glorified Him not as God but became vain in their imaginations . . . and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into images made like unto corruptible man, and to birds, and quadrupeds, and reptiles . . . and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator'?<sup>1</sup> And how is it, on the other hand, that the author of the words just quoted and his co-Apostles struck out an absolutely different line and, instead of dallying, like the cults of their own day, with the fringes of 'mystery,' went to the heart of Mystery, and became 'stewards of the mysteries of God'? Simple questions like these, such as might be put by the inconvenient child, remain for the agnostic to answer.

How is it that Christianity—including for the moment Judaism—comes to differ so systematically from all with which it came into contact? How is it that Moses, while undeniably borrowing from Egypt, rejected so much more than he took away? How is it that the Children of Israel—never backward when a good thing was going—did not cart away Isis and Osiris bodily with the jewelry? How is it that whereas other nations sacrificed *to* animals, the Jews sacrificed the animals themselves? How is it that when the people wanted

<sup>1</sup> Rom. i. 20-25. The rest of the chapter should also be read in the light of the mystery-religions.

to commit infanticide they had to go to Moloch, and that the ceremonies of Astarte were denounced while that of circumcision was encouraged? What magic changed the undesirable winged-bull into the wholly desirable angel? How is it that while the old hero-worship turned its warriors into gods, the new hero-worship was content to stop at saints? If, as Mr. Bagot assures us, it was so fashionable for 'deified men' to die by proxy that it seems as though it were their only form of recreation—in a very literal sense—why did not the borrowers of Christianity take the hint and fall into line? How comes it that Christmas is *not* the rational 'Feast of Maternity' which Mr. Bagot is prepared to tolerate, but the celebration of the fact that God was made flesh? How is it that sacrifice, all the world over confessedly defective, is in Christianity pronounced 'perfect and complete'? How is it that while everywhere else a living victim dies, in Christianity dead substance becomes the Living Victim?—So we might go on, for the questions do not need seeking, they simply stare us in the face all along the line of Comparative Religion. And at the root of them all lies the problem: How is it that these differences are not the result of premeditated choice, like that which constructed the Koran or arranged the Pantheon, but of a process subconscious, vital, as though some vast organism, some Eternal Superman,

had entered into the human sphere, for the purpose of reconciling the world to Himself? The anthropologist pays Christianity the stupendous compliment of finding the ages in Christ, and in doing so he shows us a Christ 'delivering' the ages as the poet delivers the soul of his people.

§ 7. *This Selective Function marks out Christianity as the Conserver of the Original Impulse of Religion*

Let us go back for a moment to the point at which Christ enters — historically — the religious consciousness of the race. In one sense Judaism, His immediate religious environment, was an immense advance on those primitive forms of the religious instinct which we were examining in the previous chapter. Yet in another and equally important sense Judaism stood for deterioration and atrophy. In the former of these senses it is hardly possible, as Romanes puts it,<sup>1</sup> to exaggerate mankind's indebtedness to the religion of Israel. In the latter sense all its previous usefulness only made its bankruptcy more calamitous. The pioneer had discovered a *cul-de-sac*! The religion that had carried the original impulse thus far had become a fixed and terminal type. It remained unprogressive. Why was this? It had encountered what Professor Farnell has conveniently called a 'detrimental institution,' viz. that of ethics. The 'Law,' which

<sup>1</sup> *Thoughts on Religion*, p. 159.

had arisen out of the religion, had come to overlies the religion. Like its own Jordan the Hebrew religion flowed into a Dead Sea. Now the work of Christ, so far as this immediate environment of His was concerned, was an attempt to restore or, as He Himself expressed it, 'to fulfil' the original impulse. In the words of Sabatier, it was 'to shift the motive from without to within, back from the institution to the consciousness.'<sup>1</sup>

In passing it should be observed that an *abolition* of the institution was no part of the purpose of Christ. In a certain magnificent sense His was a retrograde movement. None recognised this more clearly than the religious authorities of His own day. So vividly did they realise it that they crucified Him. Nevertheless, as subsequent history proved, it was retrogression with progress for its object. In this lies the whole paradox of the 'teaching' of Christ. As we have sometimes to retrace our steps from some mistaken course, and to get again into the main current of life, so did He aim at leading those who would follow Him back towards the original impulse, in order that by it they might be carried onward in a mightier and still broader channel of fulfilment.

All that Christ meant by 'fulfilling the Law,' by demanding that the righteousness of His followers

<sup>1</sup> *The Religions of Authority and the Religions of the Spirit*, p. 284. See, however, the whole of bk. iii. ch. ii.

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should 'exceed' the ethics of the Scribes and Pharisees, is seen in this effort to rejoin the stream at a point nearer its source. And while the supreme instance of this, as will appear later, it was by no means the only instance of it. As a matter of fact we see in Religion a kind of *élan de la vie* of its own kind, ever moving onward to complete the circuit with its source, and ever turning backward when confronted with a 'detrimental institution.' Thus fetishism failed and disappeared, not, as some have thought, because its individualistic character proved socially inconvenient, but because it impeded that unity of race which is essential to the development of man's religious life. What holds in nature also holds in regard to religion. Everywhere is competition, everywhere struggle for survival, and the aim of this strife in the field of the religious consciousness Christianity discloses as the preservation of the original impulse. Christianity assumes throughout its history that religion is one organic whole. It alone, of all the religions of the world, tells us that there has been no real break in man's consciousness of God and desire for union with Him. These two ultimate facts of instinct are seen in their true light and setting as restored in Christianity. And so restored they show that religion is a life-force in itself, wholly distinct in character from man's psychic life, having organs, functions, laws, and an objective of its own.

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§ 8. *The Conservation of the Original Impulse supplies the Key to the Principle of Classification*

As in the physical world, so here religions which proceed along the line of idiosyncrasy follow a path detrimental to survival. They remain fixed and stationary and unable to contribute to a universal maturity. In their mutual exclusiveness they have departed from the essential elements that called them into being. Like the talent which, untraded with, was given to him who had ten, all that is original and imperishable in these religions is assimilated and preserved in the system of larger affinities and purer character. It would be little to our purpose to draw up a catalogue of religion-forms based upon this system, what is to the point is that this is the only really scientific system upon which such a classification can be arranged, and we are indebted for it to Christianity as the conservator of those ultimate instincts in which we have seen the essence of religion to consist. This is the solution also of the problem of Difference which everywhere confronts the student of Comparative Religion. The resemblances point to community of origin and content and purpose; the differences to those detrimental institutions, disregarding which, the main currents of consciousness and desire surge onward in Christianity towards their consummation.

It is not novelty but originality which is at the heart of religious advance. Strictly speaking there never has been such a thing as a 'new religion.' It is a question for our later consideration whether the clamour for such in our own time is not significant of an intense desire for the fulfilment of those elemental instincts which Christ came to interpret and renew.

§ 9. *The Claim of Christianity on our further Consideration*

Thus far we have confined our attention exclusively to the function of Christianity in interpreting the *human instinct*. Let us briefly review the extent of our indebtedness to Christianity in this particular. We saw at the close of the preceding essay that the various forms of racial religion present no sort of ascending series by which we might correlate them. We marked the failure of suggested classifications based on 'complexity,' pragmatist efficiency, metaphysical distinction, or the fulfilment of the larger 'self.' Without the aid of Christianity we should be left with an immense mass of isolated facts containing no clue to their significance. In every other department of research knowledge rewards our labours, is it likely that here alone, where facts would seem to be charged with some tremendous issue, we should be left in ignorance, the pitiful heirs of agnostic ages? Is it not natural to suppose

that religion should reveal its own secret, and that in the way here suggested, viz. that having found in what religion universally consists, that form of it which has most in common with other forms, while at the same time tending to preserve the original impulse, should give us the clue to its advance?

If, then, our indebtedness to the guidance of Christianity is so great, is it not reasonable to proceed, and inquire into its own particular claim? For in summing up man's religious consciousness Christ was not so much concerned with interpreting the human instinct, as with revealing Himself as the Divine Response. It is in this direction that we shall continue our inquiry in the following chapter.

## IV

### Response

To suppose that these multifarious conceptions should be one and all absolutely groundless, discredits too profoundly the average human intelligence, from which all our individual intelligences are derived.—HERBERT SPENCER.

For as water, always the same in itself, is modified in form and quality, according to the state of the atmosphere—appearing in the mornings of warm calm days as dew on the grass, at other times as refreshing rain, in disturbed states of the atmosphere as destructive hail, and in winter as snow and ice—so comes the one Divine Word, conditioned in form and quality by the varying mental atmospheres.—J. W. FARQUHAR, *The Gospel of Divine Humanity*.

Man's religion is none the less a Divine revelation though it may be shown to have grown out of the savage and crude superstitions of barbarous tribes. . . . Why should we fear to recognise the soothsayer and diviner as the ancestor of the prophet in the line of mental and spiritual development? No slur or slight will thereby be cast upon prophecy. For everything has a right to be judged by what it is in itself in its completed state, not by what it was in some earlier stages of its physical or spiritual existence, still less by what its physical or spiritual progenitors may have been.—G. C. JOYCE, *The Inspiration of Prophecy*.

- § 1. Recapitulation. § 2. Interpretation the clue to response. § 3. The natural selection of response. § 4. Two objections to this view. § 5. Personality the goal of the original impulse. § 6. Objection on the score of anthropomorphism. § 7. The personal fact of response, apart from the didactic. § 8. The phenomena 'naturally' attendant on a divine response.

#### § 1. Recapitulation

THE fact that Christianity alone affords such an interpretation of the religious consciousness as

gives order and relation to its various forms, naturally rivets our attention, and leads us to ask whether Christianity may not be what it has all along claimed to be, viz. the response to the consciousness and desire which it interprets.

At the risk of repetition, let us be quite sure what it is we have before us. What we have been observing has been a selection, organic and vital, on the part of Christianity, of those elements of the religious consciousness of the race which best tend to the preservation of the original impulse. Does this mean that the religious consciousness has found its final expression in Christianity? Whatever may be said for it intellectually—and this will come in for consideration presently,<sup>1</sup>—we believe that spiritually finality has not been reached, and the fact that Christianity claims to be itself a progress bears out this impression. But as a progress at one with the original impulse, we may well believe that Christianity is the path of advance in the religious life of the race, the line along which consummation may be expected.

This, however, might equally hold good if religion, and Christianity in common with it, were a merely human thing, if it were merely the reaching out of the human instinct after some imaginary good, if the 'eternal fact' of Spencer were an everlasting surmise without any 'objective' response or

<sup>1</sup> See below, ch: ix.

satisfaction. That, however, would be so entirely contrary to the explicit claim and statement of Christianity as to render Christianity the deceiver as well as the interpreter of the religious instinct ! In that case the matter would stand thus : Christianity would, of course, retain its prominence as the interpreter of the religious consciousness, only, religion being an entirely human affair, those who desired to practise it would do so on the lines of a Christianity from which all trace of the supernatural had been excluded. As a matter of fact this is precisely the tendency of many persons in regard to Christianity to-day. The implications of such a position would involve an entire readjustment of the facts of religion in their bearing on life. Fortunately we are relieved from the task of tracing out and examining these by the fact that Christianity claims not only that there *is* a Divine response to the religious instinct, but that it is itself that response. No one with the New Testament before him can deny this. The question before us then is, What is the character of that response ? In other words, having viewed Christianity as the interpreter of the human instinct, we have now to see in what sense it is the mediator of the Divine response.

### § 2. *Interpretation the Clue to Response*

The interpretive function of Christianity is the more striking because it is nowhere claimed or

expressed in so many words. Christ does not come before us as the arbiter of the comparative merits of different religions. He opened His revelation, He proposed Himself as the object of men's desire, and the result was a key to all that the ages had felt and sought on this profoundest of human interests. Comparisons are almost certain to shock us, being so far below the sublimity of the subject, and yet this point is so vital to the whole conception of Christianity here put forward, that comparison seems inevitable. Let us say, then, that Shakespeare did not furnish us with any intellectual criticism of the drama; he launched his creative art upon the world, and by virtue of its excellence interpreted for man his dramatic instinct, and all previous and successive attempts fell into scale accordingly. The chemist may express in formulæ the component parts of the gem, but nature flashes them forth in the radiance of the crystal and the pulsations of the ruby. So Christ, by no mechanic selection, no critical apparatus, but by the secret alchemy of personal contact, expresses in His life, and in all subsequent co-operation with His life, the constituents of race-religion in their due order and proportion. All understanding of religion, from St. Paul onwards, has resulted from contact with the Mind of Christ. And so entirely personal is the process by which the selection is achieved, that when we speak of

Christianity in this connection we shall be understood to mean Christ, the mystic or spiritual Christ operative in the race.

This personal secret of the interpretation gives us our first clue to what the Divine response really is. For interpretation *is* response. The musician, in the very act of interpreting the harmony *within* us, reveals the harmony which exists *without* in the mysterious realm of transcendent reason. All art is, in this sense, not so much creative as interpretive. The same is true of knowledge. For knowledge, properly speaking, is the lifting of the veil of obscurity from the eye of the mind or soul, not the thrusting upon us of something originally absent. Every question is pregnant with its answer. Every problem contains its own solution—nay, it is the solution that gives rise to the problem as its fragments lie about us ‘in disconnection dull and spiritless.’ And similarly, with regard to the religious consciousness, the response is already in the instinct. As the negative charge of electricity is drawn out from it, not imparted to it, on the approach of the positive pole, so the human heart is found by the Interpreter to be already surcharged with the electricity of Response on the approach of Divine Love. ‘I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.’

Viewed in this light, a fresh construction is put on the results of anthropological research, and it



is this that a spiritual religion ought to have been quick to perceive and grasp at the first. In *all* instinct there is the inward breath of Divine Response. The 'thou' is ever latent in the 'Art thou there?' The stone suggests the question, but the answer is contained in that instinct of expectancy to which the stone was mere external stimulus. It is a sound principle of development that the *capacity* for what is found in more advanced stages must have existed in earlier. To have traced religion to its ultimate instincts in expectancy and desire is also to have discovered an Object of the religious consciousness. Every advance in the desire for union with that Object is, as well as an advance on man's side, an advance also on the part of the Object. 'Approach' thus comes to mean in this connection *rapprochement*. If we substitute the word 'response' for 'instinct,' and then retrace our steps over the whole ground which anthropological research has covered, we shall find that the true bearing of that science on the religious history of the race is a kind of Scriptureless revelation. There is probably no single object in all nature, from the stars above him to the stones beneath his feet, that has not at some time or other brought response to man's expectancy. In a superficial sense, it is true, nothing could be more unlike religion as we are accustomed to think of it to-day than the 'god-knowledge' of primitive races,

and yet fantastic and conflicting as is what anthropology reveals, a real Divine Response is there. Nothing is less suggestive of the light and heat of fire, the beauty and power of the leaping flame, than the coal hewn out of the darkness, yet it is indeed 'buried sunshine.' Nothing can exceed in feebleness the tiny seed borne upon the breeze at the beck of every fortune, yet all the form and fruitfulness of the summer slumber in its husk, colour is there and the unfolding leaf, shelter and song, the thoughts of lovers and the dreams of age—*there*, in that tiny impotent speck that would not suggest a thought save of insignificance and death. So the glory tenanted the gloom, and in weakness and unloveliness the light had its dwelling, and every 'error' that bares its shame to the gracious vision of Christ conceals a God Who so loved the world as to tarry therein reconciling it to Himself.

But it may be very naturally objected: How was it that a response that is 'Divine' was productive of so many strange and fantastic race experiences? How did it come to exhibit such an admixture of cruelty, shamelessness, and waste of life as our present knowledge of the race discloses? And particularly, How was it that the full articulation of the Response was so long delayed? How, indeed, did there come to be any differentiation at all between 'instinct' and 'response' if they are so essentially one?

These are questions that cannot be shirked, and it is to be wished that they would press themselves home on the attention of every student of Comparative Religion. The same spiritual force, which, it is claimed, has supplied the clue to the Response, has provided an answer to the problem they present, and the only answer which covers the whole ground of the perplexing phenomena. That answer requires to be considered by itself, and must be deferred until we have followed out the thread of the present and following chapters. But whatever this may turn out to be, to it alone is referable the sundering of instinct and response. But for it there would be no paradox in the words: 'Before they call I will answer.'<sup>1</sup> For the present we must leave the problem suggested by the countless forms of religion, their confused dialects and fierce animosities, and concentrate our attention upon One in whom is 'neither circumcision, nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free.'

### § 3. *The Natural Selection of Response*

If we were asked to gather up in one phrase the more important characteristics of the *literary* religions, we should be inclined to speak of them as the dawn of personality. What has been called 'prophetic audition'<sup>2</sup> gradually became refined

<sup>1</sup> Isa. lxx. 24.

<sup>2</sup> The phrase is Dr. G. C. Joyce's. See his *Inspiration of Prophecy*, ch. vi.

and sublimated to attend the Response through a medium more intimate and less dependent on sensuous stimuli than is<sup>1</sup> the case with primitive races. Priest and prophet, sybil and oracle take the place of incidental material stimulus. And as man responds in turn to what he feels to be the Divine Voice, his thoughts and musings on the material world become responding objects clearly distinguished from his own desires. Olympian Jove and Levitical Jehovah are as convincing to warrior and prophet as the fetish was to the savage hunter. The deepest, most inalienable thing about Socrates is his 'dæmon,' and Cleanthes sings his canticle of faith no less clearly than Simeon or Ambrose. In sage, savant, and philosopher, in the rulers, the fighters, the organisers of mankind, in its poets and artists and legislators, the Response came, more or less imperfectly, yet always convincingly. The Response came not down full grown from Heaven, but welling up from the earth-bound heart, rent with the anguish of a mighty travail, great with the wonder of the pre-Christian Christ.

‘Where’er thou findest truth and grace  
Deep things of God beneath them lie;  
These are the Christ within the race,  
Bow down before their mystery.’

<sup>1</sup> One cannot consistently use the past tense in view of the fact that primitive races continue to exist side by side with others more developed. A large part of the race is still in its infancy—which complicates the task of biography!

This pre-Incarnate Response was, as has already been said, peculiarly strong among the Hebrews, who regarded themselves, and have always been regarded by Christianity, as the unique vehicle of Divine Response. This, the alleged favouring of one race above the rest, has been a frequent source of difficulty with thoughtful people. It has seemed inconsistent with the idea of universal Fatherhood, while the numerical insignificance of the ' favourite ' race compared with the millions of those outside the ' Covenant ' has been repugnant to the bolder conceptions of Divine Love. In the light, however, of natural selection there certainly ceases to be anything exceptional in such a course, for it is exactly what we are familiar with in the organic world, and in the general movements of humanity. The history of existence is the history of ' favoured races,' and the mere size of the race has been found to bear hardly any relation to its function and destiny. Moreover, the larger conception of the solidarity of the human race redeems all such selection from the appearance of ' favouritism.' The particular gifts of any one people accrue in the long run to the advantage of the whole. Greek intellect and Roman genius for government are diffused throughout the race in heightened capacity for reason and control. No one complains that Pericles and Cicero were confined to small peninsulas, or that the greatest dramas in the world were

produced for an obscure London theatre. And when we see the Hebrew genius for religion passing into the possession of the race, purified from the transitory and detrimental, and yet 'in diffusion ever more intense,' who will speak of incompatibility with Divine Love and universal Fatherhood ! That which accrues to the advantage of all cannot be reckoned the favouring of one.

No doubt to the Hebrew himself the matter presented a very different aspect. He regarded himself as created and ordained to cover the earth with the glory of Jehovah, and his literature is saturated with this high and responsible distinction. Is it not always so with human destiny, viewed through the refracting medium of national thought and feeling ? When men are making history they are least capable of philosophising upon it. The struggle for existence and the element of freedom prevent the nation as they prevent the individual from acknowledging itself a part only of the cosmic process. The vantage-ground of the spectator is reserved for those who come after, and the science of events is in the hands of history.

For this very reason it is impossible to form a just estimate of religion as it existed among the Hebrews unless we fully admit the broader conceptions of our own time. All literature connected with religion is part of the Response, and is profitable according to its degree and its adaptedness

to the genius and growth of the people who receive it. 'To judge and condemn other scriptures, such as the Koran, as wholly worthless and evil, is immeasurably to judge and condemn Him, by Whose Providence the book and its religion exists, until its believers are prepared for clearer and fuller light.'<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, to regard the Hebrew Scriptures as of final infallible authority is to hark back to fetishism. The truth is that they are alive with a sense of Response which other writings manifest in a less,—even a much less—degree. In both kinds we mark a similarity of mode. Vision, dream, and trance are common to both. In both we perceive the Divine Voice rather eliciting from its children a revelation latent within them, than imparting what is purely external. Yet, as in the world of science the brighter intellects arrive at the results in front of the rest, so the Hebrew genius was first to catch and transmit the fuller Response, and in their records 'we are provided with the first-hand narratives of a large number of inspired persons diverse from one another in a hundred ways, yet all alike in this, that through each one of them some fragment of spiritual truth was for the first time published to the world.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. W. Farquhar, *The Gospel of Divine Humanity*, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Anything like an adequate treatment of the whole subject of Biblical Inspiration is obviously impossible in a passing reference. All that is here attempted is an indication of the part it

§ 4. *Two Objections to this View*

It is worth while to pause here a moment and consider two objections which are almost sure to be urged against this treatment of a Divine revelation. The first arises from those who look upon it as an entirely novel Christian position. Very possibly they regard it as a last resource of the apologist, driven by the extremes of materialistic monism to take refuge in such a view of the world and history as is sufficiently monistic to be compatible with modern ideas. This, however, is a mistake. The whole conception, of which the above is a very imperfect account, is to be found in the New Testament, and in the Fathers of the Church. To take only one instance, nothing could well be more 'modern' than the statement that the Response came 'to the fathers in sundry portions and in diverse manners,'<sup>1</sup> and while the sacred books of other races not uncommonly claim to be a direct and completed revelation, the Hebrew writings nowhere claim to be such, and are, if on this ground only, entirely unique. It is true that at certain periods of Christian history this 'view' has

has played in the totality of Response. Those who would pursue the study of this phase of the religious consciousness could have no better guide than is afforded by Dr. Joyce's work on *The Inspiration of Prophecy* (Oxford University Press, 1910), dealing as it does with the whole subject from the standpoint of a broad and spiritual faith.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. i. 1.



been lost sight of, but this is explained by the fact that popular currents of thought have set in other directions, obliging the apologist to concentrate on corresponding aspects of truth. So far from its being a view forced upon us by monistic tendencies, the fact is rather that the organic conceptions with which our age is identified are a 're-discovery' of ideas perfectly familiar to St. Augustine and St. Paul. No doubt a good deal of it may prove novel—very novel—to the average Christian. But, as already suggested, the average Christian has a way of lagging behind the best thought of his age which, if he represented what Christianity really is thinking, might well justify the cry for a new religion. Probably he has been in the habit of regarding Christianity as 'absolute' religion, and the rest as degraded types or 'superstitions.' More probably still, he has not thought about it at all but has gone cheerfully along the old monopolist lines. He is a man destined to many surprises, here and hereafter, one of them being that Christianity was in the Fetish before it was in the Bible.

The other objection comes from those who look upon such views as the above as identified with Pantheism. Pantheism expresses the idea that God and the world, and consequently human nature, are *identical*. Obviously, such a doctrine precludes all idea of Response, for to speak of a Being Who is all one with His creatures responding to them

is nonsense. If Pantheism were the interpretation of the world we should be left with the amazing riddle of a universal desire on the part of man to approach himself !

To say that the response is latent within the instinct, to say that God is latent in man, is a very different thing from saying that God is man. The difference is measured by personality, of which we shall have more to say in a moment. If the religious consciousness obliges us to infer a personal immanence, or else, in spite of Herbert Spencer's protest, treat the entire religious phenomenon as a delusion, we shall not be deterred from proclaiming the truth by the superficial resemblance of a modern revival of a very ancient heresy.

#### § 5. *Personality the Goal of the Original Impulse*

We have summarised the pre-Incarnate manifestations of Response as the dawn of personality. Now this progress towards personality is exactly what we might expect of a quality whose instincts are consciousness and desire. If there is in man a universal ultimate expectancy of a Being other than Himself, and an instinct that bids him approach this Being, is anything likely to satisfy him but the personal manifestation of, and union with, that Being ? What conceivable code of conduct or perfection of life, or knowledge of nature, or harmony with her laws could satisfy him in a quest which is

born of the suspicion that he is a person, and forces its way often regardless of conduct, nature, and life? All forms of religion that ever were are but variants of the cry: 'My soul is athirst for God, for the living God; when shall I come to appear before God?'

And if it can be said that Christianity co-ordinates the varieties of the religious consciousness, it is because Christ Himself has proved to be the living co-ordination of the partial and mystic language of Divine Response. It is true that Christ did not use the language of the schools, and that in all the sayings attributed to Him there is no such thing as a definition of 'personality.' But then the whole 'revelation' of Christ is not so much vocal as vital. In a sense it was profoundly true of Him, as it is of Life itself: 'He shall not strive nor cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets.' Life does not approach us with demonstration of speech, but in the living fact, the new-born babe, the awakening spring. It is quite hopeless to estimate the real significance of Christ, if we are approaching Him with prepossessions founded on Plato or Vedic metaphysics. His whole work differed in kind from every other 'teacher,' in that it was not verbal but—if we may coin a term—factual. It is even difficult to catch a glimpse of the process, we can only clearly see it in effect. When we ascertain where exactly men were, what

they were thinking, what were their common stock of notions, before He appeared, and then pass to the immediate effect of His appearance as registered in the notions and thought of St. John and St. Paul, we are in a position to understand something of the difference He made to human conceptions. A whole new terminology was at once called into being as a result of contact with the Mind of Christ. It is a remarkable thing, and one too little noticed, that the spiritual state of the world at the Coming of Christ should have been so faithfully and abundantly recorded, and that this record should have been so well preserved. Measured by it and by the first Christian writings, we are obliged to admit that human thought underwent a change as profound as it was sudden. It is remarkable that neither Plato nor Aristotle had any real conception of personality, while amongst the people in whose midst Christ appeared, the notion was too partial and undetermined to resist the incursions of institutionalism. Professor Bigg<sup>1</sup> shows that the Eastern religions of Isis and Mithras were then being welcomed because by their virtual monotheism and their proffer of peace and happiness they seemed to meet the needs of a dawning personality. Christ did this completely. In the words of Dr. Norman Rowland: <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Church and Roman Empire.*

<sup>2</sup> Hastings' *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, art. 'Personality.'

' He gave philosophy a new world to discover. He roused and satisfied experiences of the soul which at length called into being a new terminology. The fact that the analysis of personality first went into the depths in St. Paul's epistles, argues that the first perfect exposition of personality was in St. Paul's Master. For a thing must be before it is thought upon. Where even Plato and Aristotle had groped blindly, Christ moved with perfect assurance. What was hidden from them " the wise and prudent " was all in all to Him. It might truly be said that personality is the pivot of the Gospel. It does not move in the regions of mere intellect or will or feeling, nor even in the field of their joint exercise. It moves throughout in the region of the man himself, in his self-consciousness and self-determination, and finds its highest expression in the Divine passion for the soul, and the human hunger for God.'

It is most important that we should realise this, because we are often told to-day that the idea of a personal God is borrowed from man's notion of his own personality. That is a sublime anachronism ! The fact is the exact opposite. The knowledge of the Divine personality gave to man the first clear knowledge of his own. To borrow for a moment the language of the schools, uncouth as it seems beside the simplicity of Christ, the ideas of self-consciousness and self-determination, the ' I am ' and the ' I will,' which we derive from Christ's self-revelation, are those which we perceive to be,

within close limits, the best notion of what we ourselves are. In so revealing God, in Himself, Christ aroused in man a sufficient conception of his own personality for it to become the organ whereby he reaches out to apprehend the true nature of that object, in the consciousness of, and desire for Whom, we have seen religion to consist. If, as Lotze says,<sup>1</sup> human personality is but a 'weak and faint copy of the complete personality that can be in God only,' is there not a startling parallelism between the human and Divine personality and the elements in which we have seen religion to consist ?

§ 6. *Objection on the Score of Anthropomorphism*

Apart, however, from the order in which the conceptions of Divine and human personality arose the reader will very likely object, is not personality after all only a subtler form of anthropomorphism ? The answer must be frankly given that it is. But then from anthropomorphism in one form or another there is no escape. For some obscure reason the term 'anthropomorphic' seems to be set down in the mind of the average man as an opprobrious epithet. No doubt there is a very great difference between a gross anthropomorphism, such as marks some stages of polytheism, and the employment of man's highest spiritual conception of himself as the organ of Divine knowledge. And the root

<sup>1</sup> *Outlines of Psychology*, p. 72.

of the difference is not that the former is frequently fantastic and degraded, but that it is fixed and final, whereas personal anthropomorphism, while sufficiently limited to meet the requirements of intelligence, is not final, but capable of ever expanding with the growing life of man. 'Ye shall see greater things than these' is the promise that ever attends the personal revelation of Christ in all its stages. This sense of the word ought to overcome that sensitiveness to its expression which is so frequently in evidence to-day, and restore to its proper use a word which expresses a legitimate channel of knowledge quite as much as a necessary limitation of thought.

Those who say that when we think of God in terms of personality we worship a mere reflection of ourselves are altogether beside the mark. They might as well say that we know nothing about the stars because all our astronomy is analogical, or that we can know nothing about each other, because each man's knowledge of another is based upon his knowledge of himself. To say that our knowledge of God is anthropomorphic is simply to say that it is knowledge. We are shut up either to using our organ of personality in the perception of the Divine Character, or to abiding in ignorance. But all knowledge whatever involves the same alternative. To admit, therefore, the alternative in regard to the knowledge of God is simply to

commit ourselves to universal ignorance. Unless we admit the validity of the analogical method in religion we may as well close our libraries and laboratories and go back to the woods.

It is well, however, clearly to understand that it is not a case of Christ's revealing to us our own personality and then bidding us think of God as 'being like that,' i.e. like ourselves. Without Christ as Himself Divine Personality the knowledge of our own personality, even suppose it possible for us to have arrived at a knowledge of it, could not have carried us far. 'The Word became flesh, and dwelt amongst us,' and, so dwelling, 'we beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father.' 'He opened up new vistas for the soul's self-consciousness by revealing the inherent but hitherto hidden natures of God, the world, and the soul . . . and higher ways for the soul's self-determination by bringing the Gift of the Holy Spirit, in the strength of Whom the soul overcomes the world, submits to God, and thus realises itself.'<sup>1</sup> This, however, is to anticipate. What we need to realise in the present connection is that all that we now understand by personality, self-consciousness, and self-determination we owe to the appearance within our sphere of One Who is supreme Self-consciousness and Self-determination, the 'I AM' and the 'I WILL' of the universe.

<sup>1</sup> A. Norman Rowland, *Hastings' Dictionary*, op. cit.



In the partial personality of every sacred poet, prophet, and historian there was Response, but the Response in them necessarily partook of their imperfections and failings. In Him it was perfect and complete, and after nineteen hundred years of response to Him, and libraries of meditations on His words, we are but beginning dimly to see the inexhaustible Fact of Himself. In the words of Du Bose :

‘ If there is any personal expression or manifestation of God at all in our world, it can only be in and through a person or persons. . . . God cannot manifest *Himself* in mere nature, either in the whole or in any particular fact or phenomenon of it. Because *Himself* means His Personality, and there is nowhere in nature, as such, any “ self ” or “ selfhood ” that can manifest or express personality. . . . He reveals Himself in a Person in Whom Himself, His Personal Self, can be, and can be seen. . . . In all the actual universe, so far as we know and can know it, God is nowhere directly knowable save in the Person of Jesus Christ.’ <sup>1</sup>

And here we shall do well also to remember the *spiritual* nature of the personality which has been aroused within us to act as the organ of Divine knowledge. The full consideration of this belongs to a later chapter, but it would be entirely misleading to leave the impression that the knowledge of God is a purely intellectual concept.

<sup>1</sup> *The Reason of Life*, pp. 205 ff.

No amount of 'analogical method' could avail to satisfy the consciousness and desire were it sundered from its context in prayer and communion. In this sense Dr. Inge profoundly suggests that 'the best definition of Prayer might also serve as the definition of religion.'<sup>1</sup> Faith, i.e. the human response to the Divine, is certainly required to be intelligent, but an intelligent faith, spiritually active and responsive, is a very different thing from mere assent to intellectual statements. In revealing Himself to us in the Person of Christ, the Divine Love is only, as it were, beginning our education as a race in a higher remove; and our whole co-operation is necessary if we are to advance into actual union and likeness.

§ 7. *The Personal Fact of Response, apart from the Didactic*

The whole Life of Christ is the unveiling of the Divine Object of our consciousness, as we shall presently see that His Sacrifice is the summary and interpretation of the instinct of approach. Both form a disclosure of fact, not, or not only, a categorical 'teaching.' If this point seems to be laboured, it is because of an almost invincible tendency to-day to concentrate on the 'teaching' of Christ. We are so accustomed to view the work of Christ in an intellectual sense, that it is of the

<sup>1</sup> *Truth and Falsehood in Religion*, p. 11.

first importance that we should accustom our minds to modes of reflection that are not intellectual merely. The fact that He never committed His revelation to writing shows how serenely independent He moved of the intellectual appeal which has been employed by other 'teachers.' The writings which incorporate that revelation are merely a part of that 'witness' which He commanded His followers to bear to His Person. So also is the Creed, and all those patristic and other writings which may be called amplifications of the Creed. All these may be regarded as extensions of His Personality in thought. It is in the Personality Itself that the whole of man's consciousness and desire are centred. After His departure His followers preserved most jealously this personal claim. They did 'not preach themselves but Christ.' They did not expound a system, they proclaimed Christ. They themselves professed to be one with Christ, and the very word 'Christian,' at first a vulgar nickname, signifies 'little Christ.' Unless Christ did conceive Himself to be the centre of man's enlightenment and desire, the action of His followers is even more unintelligible than His own claims. They proclaimed union with Him to be the goal of all religion, not merely that of the Jews, but, in St. Paul's ringing phrase,<sup>1</sup> 'of the Gentiles also.' Their whole life was dominated by an experience

<sup>1</sup> Rom. ix., 24 ; xv.

for which there is no other term than a 'new self,' a realisation of personality so vivid and vital that it eclipsed all their former life. This latter, 'the natural man,' was 'buried,' and in its place 'the Personality of Christ was formed within them,' They lived, yet no longer they but Christ, nor is there any getting away from the historic fact that in Christ they have risen into the Life of God.

§ 8. *The Phenomena 'naturally' attendant on a Divine Response*

The above reflection marks out a line of fulfilment of the consciousness and desire very far divergent from a manufactured or eclectic religion, viz. a preservation of the original impulse of religion leading up to a Response as soon as that impulse has received the training requisite to enable it to acknowledge the Response. But we shall have to be prepared for something farther still from modern attempts after an eclectic and static religion. For the entry into our life of One Who is complete Personality must lead us to expect His appearance to be accompanied throughout by exceptional occurrences. This is not because we deem it necessary that there should be Divine 'interventions' to attest His Nature and Office, but because complete Personality must exhibit personal extension of knowledge and power far beyond those which man had attained, or, indeed is ever likely to attain.

In simple phrase, Christ, if indeed He is the Response to the religious instincts of mankind, must be 'miraculous.'

Those to whom the 'miracles' of Christ present a difficulty, do not sufficiently regard them in connection with other facts and aspects of Christ as He is brought before us in the Gospel account and in the experience of men like St. Paul and St. Francis. It is Christ Who is miraculous, not His miracles.' A Christ without miracles, as a Divine Response, would be the chief obstacle to man's faith. Although not one of us can exhibit anything parallel to Napoleon's mastery of detail, we do not on that account reject the accounts of it. Amazing as they are, we accept them without difficulty because they seem to be of a piece with what we know of that remarkable man. Similarly, though on a plane widely removed, we ought to understand that such a manifestation of Personality as was Christ's involves unparalleled extensions of that 'self-determination' which is one of the essentials of personality. The subject is one of such importance that it demands a separate chapter.

## Personality and Miracle

The question is not whether this world has a spiritual significance but whether it is *all*, or only *part* of the whole.—J. N. FIGGIS, *Civilisation at the Cross Roads*.

Once admit that psychical influences may interfere with the course of physical nature, and 'you don't know where you are'; you no longer can serenely affirm that miracles do not happen. They may happen any moment and falsify the most confident predictions of physical science.—DR. McDUGALL, *Body and Mind*.

§ 1. The old conception of the miraculous and the new. § 2. A test case—healing. § 3. The expression, 'The order of nature,' and allied terms. § 4. Criticism of the mechanica order of nature. § 5. The personal equation. § 6. The alternative. § 7. Definition of miracle. § 8. The idea of the miraculous not only rational but also Christian and Catholic. § 9. The personal miracle of Response in Christ § 10. The problem of the Cross.

### § 1. *The Old Conception of the Miraculous and the New*

CHRISTIANITY rests, and for ever will rest, on what is termed the 'miraculous,'<sup>1</sup> and yet there is

<sup>1</sup> In the light of current opinion to-day, both sceptical and modernist, this is a sufficiently bold beginning. It is not however, without strong warrant in what one may call 'tendency-literature,' see, e.g. Dr. T. H. Wright, in *Hastings' Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, Art. 'Miracles': 'Without being

probably no word so misunderstood both by Christians and their critics as this term. Indeed it is hard to say whether Christianity suffers more in the present day from the use of the term or from the want of the fact.

The term has a long and important history. There is no need, however, to review that history in detail here. It will suffice to distinguish between two general conceptions of miracle, the older, or pre-scientific, and the modern, or perhaps one should say, modernist. It is important to draw this contrast, because the older idea is still current with the great majority of Christian people, and much of the critical attitude towards Christianity to-day is due to the presentment of the Divine element in it in a way which, however 'miraculous' our ultimate idea of miracle may be, went out of date with Paley.

This archaic notion may be conveniently summarised as stated in Murray's 'Oxford English Dictionary':

'Miracle. . . . A marvellous event occurring within human experience, which cannot have been brought about by human power, or by the operation of any natural agency, and must, therefore, be ascribed to the special intervention of the Deity or of some

unduly optimistic, we may anticipate that "the ages of faith" in every department of Christian truth, and not least in that of miracle, are yet to come.'

supernatural being ; chiefly, an act (e.g. of healing) exhibiting control over the laws of nature, and serving as evidence that the agent is either Divine, or is specially favoured of God.'

With regard to the appearance of such a definition as this in a standard modern work of reference, it is perhaps sufficient to quote Dr. Farquhar Murray's comment on Hume's definition of miracle : ' If the nineteenth century contributed nothing else to the discussion, it did at least demonstrate the inadequacy of this definition.'<sup>1</sup> With regard to the definition itself, as presenting the older conception, we shall do well to note, for reference presently, the expressions 'intervention,' 'supernatural,' 'control over the laws of nature,' and 'evidence that the agent is either Divine, or specially favoured of God.'

The modern tendency is to define miracle more and more in its relation to human knowledge. For convenience' sake, and in the loose acceptance of the term, we may refer to this as the *subjective* conception. In this sense a 'miracle' is simply an unexplained fact—the word 'fact' assuming that there is good evidence for the occurrence. A fact is said to be 'explained' when it is related to other facts in a series of sequences or co-existences. From this point of view every fact before it is 'explained' is a 'miracle.' Thus to primitive

<sup>1</sup> *Cambridge Theological Essays*, p. 311.



man events were an almost perpetual miracle. Consequently, as knowledge increased the margin of the 'miraculous' diminished. And as knowledge is continually increasing the inference is that the 'miraculous' is approaching a vanishing point, a point at which not only things present, but past events in the history of the race must be linked up with other facts already known which tended to produce them, and so cease to be isolated, or 'miraculous' within the meaning of this subjective conception.

It is too early in our task to pass judgment on this conception, but it should be noted that it is related chiefly to knowledge, and, so regarded, the 'miraculous' becomes practically a synonym for our own ignorance. That is to say, a reasonable probability is encouraged that the miraculous will entirely disappear, and that all observed and observable things will be co-ordinated in one calculable sequence in which no link is wanting.

As regards objectors to miracle, however, there is very little difference between these two conceptions. Both postulate the same kind of 'order of nature.' Both postulate a *calculable* order of nature, but the older school a calculable order liable—if it is not a Hibernicism—to 'intervention'; the modern a calculable order of which apparent interventions are really a part. Sceptics of the old school would have rejected miracle as

defined in the 'Oxford English Dictionary' on the ground that 'interventions' do not happen; the modern sceptic rejects it on the ground that the 'intervention' would prove quite calculable or 'natural' if we had the clue. The chief difference, then, between these two conceptions of the miraculous, so far as belief is concerned, is that the modern includes the sceptical conception, whereas the older excluded it.

### § 2. *A Test Case—Healing*

Without at present commenting further on these conceptions, let us apply to them a test case, with a view to accustoming ourselves to their widely different standpoints.

It is rather odd that the one concrete example Murray's definition furnishes should be that of Healing. Possibly the preponderance of cases of healing among the miracles attributed to Christ is accountable for the prominence given to this example. Be that as it may, the example is one which we may very profitably consider. Everyone nowadays knows that healing may be achieved in one of two ways, either physically or by 'suggestion.' In the former case we have a purely physical operation, for the success of which, so far as the operator is concerned, only formula knowledge is necessary. Suggestion is exceedingly difficult to define, because it belongs to a very complex

group of phenomena with which psychology has not yet been able to deal with any sort of finality. But it is at least of common enough occurrence, and is sufficiently related to other well-known facts, psychological and physiological, to be no longer a 'miracle' in the above subjective sense. Mr. James Thompson,<sup>1</sup> who may be cited as typical of the extreme modernist position, appears to think that those of Christ's miracles concerned with disease cease to be such by calling them cases of mind cure, that is to say that though at the time of their occurrence and for hundreds of years after, they satisfied the terms of Murray's definition, they have since been related to other facts in a series which is, at any rate, partly intelligible.

Now it is exactly such a case as this of healing by suggestion, or 'mind-cure,' that indicates the breakdown of both the conceptions of the miraculous above noticed, and leaves us with a conception which except for one alternative (which we shall notice in a moment) will in all probability become the increasingly prevalent view.

In ordinary physical healing nature heals nature because of certain unchangeable properties which combine mechanically and with calculable effect. True, the proviso, *ceteris paribus*, is even here necessary, but for argument's sake it may be granted. In healing by suggestion, on the other hand, the

<sup>1</sup> *Miracles in the New Testament* (Edward Arnold).

'calculable' helps us hardly at all. Even supposing we could exactly reproduce in theory all the elements in any given act of healing of this kind, we should still be at a loss to reproduce the *act* because of the personal qualities which vary with the individuals concerned. It is on the score of this personal coefficient that the calculableness of the 'order of nature' breaks down, or, to be more exact, that the area of the calculable never can cover the entire region of possibility.

Now we have already seen that the older and modern conceptions of the miraculous, widely as they differ in other respects, agree in viewing the order of nature as calculable. Paley, at one extreme, regards *nature* as thoroughly calculable, but believes in intervention from an extra-natural source; at the other extreme Mr. James Thompson regards nature as thoroughly calculable, and believes Paley's 'interventions' to be instances of our inability to calculate their occurrence. The modern conception therefore only 'subjectifies' the former, and both leave us with the question What is the 'order of nature?' as the real heart of the problem.

### § 3. *The Expression 'The Order of Nature,' and Allied Terms*

Dr. Farquhar Murray thus sums up an examination of Huxley's attitude: 'In brief, then,

the scientific attitude towards "miracles" to-day amounts to this. No phenomenon can be regarded by a man of science as intrinsically, on *a priori* grounds, incredible. Only, as soon as the fact of its occurrence is established on sufficient evidence, *it must take its place in the order of nature*. No evidence available to science can demonstrate the intervention of any invisible (that is, unperceivable) agency.' <sup>1</sup> In other words, there is no saying that 'miracles' do not happen'; if there is good evidence for any fact, however 'marvellous,' it must be accepted as having happened, but it must be treated as any other fact, viz. it must be included in the 'order of nature,' it must not be regarded as an intervention from without. What then is meant by the 'order of nature'? This is a term we cannot afford to take for granted. It is almost as treacherous as the term 'nature' itself, and unless we know definitely in what sense we are using it we are certain to have some loose thinking. Do we mean by the 'order of nature' the entire universe, unknown to science as well as known to science? or do we mean only that part of the universe already known to science?

The older school, both of believers and sceptics, use the term 'order of nature' (or its equivalents) in the latter sense: the modern school, in the former. The older school meant by the 'order of

<sup>1</sup> *Cambridge Theological Essays*, p. 312.

nature' the sum of things within the sphere of natural law, only outside this the believers assumed an indefinitely wide sphere of 'the supernatural,' whence 'interventions' proceeded from time to time 'exhibiting control over the laws of nature.' The modern school mean by the 'order of nature' the entire universe, assuming that the mechanical process which they observe in that part of it already known to science is operative throughout all existence, and extending to every newly observed or isolated fact an analogical relationship to all other facts hitherto co-ordinated. Therefore in the 'scheme' of the modern school there is no 'supernatural,' there can be no 'intervention,' and so far from 'exhibiting control over the laws of nature' everything can only exhibit obedience to them.

This, however, is anything but satisfactory, since both schools when pressed have told us that by the 'order of nature' they mean the 'laws of nature,' and to ask what is meant by 'natural law' is at once to fill the air with the din of ancient battle. Half the strife in the early Victorian days when these two schools clashed in combat concerned this word 'law.' The old-fashioned theist used it in a legislative sense, as referring to a fixed and prescriptive code; the old-fashioned sceptic, as referring to a fixed and natural operation, as something Nature—with a capital letter—could not help doing. It was given to Huxley to teach us

the simple truth that 'law' as applied to operations in the world around and within is a totally different thing from 'law' as administered in the Law Courts, that law is, in fact, merely the human register of observed coexistences and sequences, so that when we speak of 'natural law' we really mean the ordering of our own observations.<sup>1</sup> It is here that one of the clearest brains that England has produced achieved his most notable contribution to scientific generalisation. The 'law' of the inverse squares is *not* the same thing as the force of gravitation, nor as the 'order of nature' out of which that force arises, but is simply the way in which we observe that force to operate. It is a mechanical statement of the way in which it presents itself to our intelligence. But it is obvious that *any* register of our observations, if the facts thereof bear any relation to each other, must take a mechanical form. And that being the case the idea that the entire universe is mechanical is about as abysmal an assumption as was ever made!

The modern school, then, first of all identifies the 'order of nature' with the entire universe. When we ask what the 'order of nature' is, we are told it is the domain of 'natural law.' When we ask what is 'natural law,' we learn it is a synonym for the register of our observed sequences. We need not wait to be told that those sequences, as observed, are mechanical. They *must* be mechanical, or they

<sup>1</sup> *Science and Christian Tradition*, pp. 104 ff.

could not be observed as sequences. Thus the entire universe becomes the working out of purely mechanical relations, a kind of calculating machine on a vast scale. It is reduced to formulæ as unerring as the science of numbers, and once man has thoroughly mastered his ignorance nothing can possibly happen to disturb the rhythm of human expectation.

#### § 4. *Criticism of the Mechanical Order of Nature*

This conception, however, is attended by two serious consequences to thought : (1) If the entire universe is thus capable of lying within man's knowledge, it follows that it is limited to his capacity. And though that capacity may develop to an extent of which we have now no conception, the same limitation will obviously hold of any degree of development. A mechanical universe can leave no margin of possibility beyond the human intelligence when the final outposts of that intelligence have been fixed. Limit is everywhere. But we cannot even think of limit without the unlimited, and so we reach a position in which thought is thrown into confusion. (2) If the order of nature be mechanical, there can be no such thing as 'freedom.' However we may modify the dictum that 'nothing is that errs from law,' it is very certain that nothing can err from formula, once formula is established throughout the entire order of nature. There can



be no such thing as choice, because there is no such thing as alternative. If every new fact that swims into our ken arises out of purely mechanical necessity, freedom is unimaginable. But freedom is the essence of what we mean by personality. Therefore there is no personality in the universe. Therefore there is none in man. Man, then, is not a person, not even an individual. He is nothing but a plurality of particles. He is under the impression that he has some deep-seated unity, but that is an illusion. How he comes by this illusion is a profounder problem than this of the order of nature—but let that pass. The illusion will necessitate his revising the whole of his social procedure, especially his penal code—but let that pass. The really serious inference from this position for the thinker is that by ruling out freedom it deprives the universe of unity. As man is no longer an individual, so there is no longer a universe. A mechanical nexus holds, controls, begins, and ends all. Hence the mechanical conception of the universe turns out, on its last analysis, to be one of pure ‘caprice.’ So we get back to the mentality of primitive man, and in applying our mechanical conception, we have lost its basis!

### § 5. *The Personal Equation*

It seems fairly certain that something has gone wrong in the chain of reasoning by which the order

of nature is identified with pure mechanics. Where is the flaw? Is not *this* the source of confusion, that we mistake for the order of nature the way in which it is perceived by our mechanical faculties? To revert to our example of healing—in healing by physical means we have a purely mechanical operation, all the elements of which, with the proviso already made, are covered by formulæ; in healing by suggestion we are dependent on personal qualities varying with the individual. Both are ‘natural,’ but while in the former case nature heals nature because of certain unchangeable properties which combine mechanically, in the latter it is still nature that heals nature (as distinct from the introduction of a ‘supernatural’ agent), but it is nature, on the one side, of which the properties defy anything mechanical, in the way of formulation or adjustment.

Healing is only one example of this class of operations. It is the clearest because the most frequently occurring. But it should be borne in mind that non-mechanical phenomena occupy a very considerable part of the field of events. Certainly, had we not been able to experiment with this class of phenomena, as cases of healing have enabled us to do, we might still suppose that their intransigence was due solely to our ignorance of their mechanical properties. As it is, it is difficult to see how we can avoid the conclusion that

frequently occurring events of a character which cannot be reduced to formulæ point to a personal equation in the order of nature which is ultimate.

Let us follow this one step farther. Does this personal equation suggest that there are two distinct operations within the order of nature, the personal and the mechanical? The question is an important one, because if there is such a distinction, if the mechanical *belongs* to the order of nature, then we seem to be thrown back on the older conception of miracle defined by Murray. In that case what we have within the universe is a little circle of mechanical operations, which we may call 'nature,' *plus* a limitless tract of the 'supernatural,' whence 'interventions' 'exhibiting control over the laws of nature' may always be expected, though the character and meaning of them must remain a matter of speculation. To infer this, however, would be to commit the fallacy already noticed as characteristic of the modern school, and mistake for a *part* of the order of nature the way in which it presents itself to us. The truth lies in our distinguishing between the order of nature, or any part of it, and the manner in which our own limitations oblige us to perceive it. In a word, the term 'mechanical' applies solely to our perception and the science based upon it. What is here suggested is that the order of nature is personal throughout, *and* that in certain conditions this personal operation

is capable of being observed and expressed by man in a mechanical order. This mechanical order is expressed as science. On the other hand, we have no reason to suppose that every fact or event will be correlated in a mechanical series, indeed the free element of personal being renders any such series highly improbable. The uncorrelated fact is expressed as miracle.

### § 6. *The Alternative*

But it may be said that by excluding the mechanical from the order of nature we are excluding the notion of order itself. This by no means follows. The idea of non-order is, as Bergson shows, unthinkable. In excluding the mechanical we do not even exclude the calculable. We cannot, because personality involves the idea of calculableness; but between the calculable and the mechanical there is the greatest difference. All my friend's doings, e.g. may be calculable to himself, and many of them to me in proportion as I know him; but that is not saying that my friend is bound to act according to my analysis of his action. On the assumption that the order of nature is personal throughout, the whole universe must be calculable throughout, and granted we had a calculus adequate for an infinite freedom, all the interior law of existence might be plain. We can therefore speak of the order of nature

although we refer the mechanical presentment of a part of that order to its proper source in our own perception. The only question is: What kind of an order is it?

On this question Sir Oliver Lodge has placed the alternative very clearly before us:

'The root question or outstanding controversy between science and faith rests upon two different conceptions of the universe. The one that of a self-contained and self-sufficient universe with no outlook into, or links with anything beyond, uninfluenced by any life or mind except such as is connected with a visible and tangible material body; and the other conception, that of a universe lying open to all manner of spiritual influences, permeated through and through with a Divine Spirit, . . . a universe by no means self-sufficient or self-contained but with feelers at every pore groping into another supersensuous order of existence.'<sup>1</sup>

Now, when these two alternatives lie before us, what shall guide us in our choice? Surely not the perceptive notion of a mechanical order. We cannot read into universal experience a perceptive notion peculiar to ourselves. We have no quarrel, we can have no quarrel, with that mechanical perception. To a very great extent there is a real correspondence between it and the known world about us. Science has its indisputable uses. For all that, the tendency of science is not

<sup>1</sup> *The Hibbert Journal*, October 1902.

to become coextensive with experience, but rather to shrink and withdraw from experience.

‘It has become increasingly clear that science, instead of being coextensive with experience or reality, proceeds towards her goal by eliminating all aspects of the physical world except one—the mechanical, and that by repeated distillations as it passes through the several stages of comparison, conceptualisation, induction, law-making, and selective or conventional construction of ultimate principles, it gradually loses all traces of concrete reality. Professor James Ward has pointed out in his earlier series of Gifford Lectures<sup>1</sup> that the abstract schematisation of science which survives these processes, whereby matter is at last resolved into something as characterless as space, consists only of kinematics. The mechanical theory, in fact, if taken for metaphysics, over-reaches itself; instead of providing us with a proof that the universe is a mechanism and nothing more, it at length discloses its purely mathematical nature and therewith the same unfitness for a philosophy of the actual universe as that of the Pythagorean system, which sought to explain reality in terms of number.’<sup>2</sup>

And again,

‘the conceptual shorthand which seeks to epitomise such knowledge of nature as is required by elimination and generalisation, and to make it coherent, has proved itself to be so wholly ideal and conventional that

<sup>1</sup> *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, v.

<sup>2</sup> F. R. Tennant, ‘The Isolation of Theology,’ *Quarterly Review*, October 1912, p. 358.

neither in its present state nor in its future progress can the scientist who is aware of its limitations discern any possibility of conflict with theistic belief. Professor Henri Poincaré is but one amongst a large number of eminent living physicists whose recent investigation of the logic of science has served to render obsolete the "naturalism" of a generation ago.<sup>1</sup>

In view of results such as these, it does not seem difficult to decide which alternative to choose. In selecting that idea of the order of nature which regards it as the operation of free personal being, we are not rejecting science, but only confining it within its own confessed limits. Thus, by 'nature' we shall understand the entire order of nature, and not the little corner of it explored by scientific investigation. The 'laws of nature' will be strictly limited to the expression of those coexistences and sequences which the observation of man has registered. The 'supernatural'—if it is necessary to retain the term—will refer to all events or facts whatever for which there is good evidence, whether they are 'explained,' i.e. linked up with other observed facts in a causal sequence, or no. In such a category the term 'intervention' will be quite out of place, as will be also such expressions as 'control over the laws

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 368. Note that Professor Poincaré writes without any reference to the theological bearings of the results at which he arrives.

of nature,' since those 'laws' bear reference exclusively to man's mechanical perception.

### § 7. *Definition of Miracle*

By 'miracle,' then, we mean *an occurrence which may or may not be correlated with other facts already observed, but the production and reproduction of which, in either case, bears reference to states of being, and not to the application of formulæ.* In a word, miracle is related to being, not to law. We are thus enabled to retain the term 'miracle' in no sublimated sense, but with all the force attaching to its use by the Apostles themselves, and at the same time in harmony with organic conception of the universe with which the great majority of scientific men are in agreement.

The whole battle-ground of miracle, therefore, lies in the realm of evidence. Once the 'isolated fact' is established on good grounds, it has to be accepted, point where it may. But in what way can it point? In other words, what is the evidential value of miracle? According to Murray's definition, that is, in the older use of the term, a miracle 'served as evidence that the agent was either Divine, or was especially favoured of God.' In the modern sense of miracle (not the sense taken here) the only evidential value of a miracle is to prove its own existence. That is perfectly reasonable—on the



modern hypothesis. Granted that a 'miracle' is *only* an isolated fact awaiting co-ordination with some group of sequences, what *can* it testify? Its own existence, and nothing else. If, e.g. the Resurrection were only an isolated fact in human history, which we expected would eventually be co-ordinated with other as yet undiscovered facts of the same class, how could it 'serve as evidence, either that Christ was Divine, or was 'especially favoured of God'? It would add to the mystery surrounding Christ, and no more. That is to say, it would 'serve as evidence for' itself. If however the view here set forth in distinction from both the older and the modern, namely, that the entire order of nature is the outcome of free personality be accepted, then the Resurrection, being related to Personality, is as strong an evidence of personal action as existence itself. It is not the case of an 'intervention' 'exercising control over the laws of nature.' It is a case of nature being other than we knew, and, in the case in point, of 'death' being a kind of sublime accident without finality or inevitableness.

But what, in this case, is the bearing of the Resurrection on the Person Who rose again? If we knew nothing else about Him but the fact that He had risen from the dead, it would be impossible to say more than that He must stand related to the Personal Being behind or

within phenomena in a unique degree. As it is, we do know a very great deal about Him. We know, e.g. that He proclaimed Himself to be that very Personal Being. The miracle, then, goes with the claim. And yet it presents itself in a much stronger light than as 'evidence' of the truth of that claim; since it does not stand alone, but is only one—doubtless to us the most arresting one—of a great number of abnormal occurrences. Christ is not so much a Person who wrought miracles as Himself the miraculous event. There is nothing connected with Him that is not miraculous. The mere details of His eating and drinking and wearing clothing are, taken with the normal-abnormal life He is recorded to have lived, the most miraculous things of all! We can only say, here is One Who was of us, and yet was not of us, Who lived our life and yet transcended it all the time, of Whom it is difficult, and perhaps indifferent, to say whether His life represented Heaven on earth, or earth translated into Heaven. If miracle is the action of free personal being, then Christ is the Free Personal Being. The term 'evidence,' then, seems to be too feeble an expression to use of His miracles, of Whom the greatest miracle would be that He should ever have come into the sphere of human observation at all, if the greater were not that He did enter it in such complete humanity.

§ 8. *The Idea of the Miraculous not only Rational,  
but also Christian and Catholic*

Let us, however go back a little. The question will be asked, Is not this idea of miracle an accommodation to organic and 'immanent' conceptions of nature, rather than what Christians are supposed to hold as orthodox or Catholic? And to this the same answer must be returned as was made to a similar question in the last chapter. It was then asked of the view that all forms of religion throughout the race are latent Christianity, is not this a kind of pious monism? And the reply was that, 'pious monism' or not, the conception was brought out of the New Testament and the Fathers. The same reply must be returned here. The miracles are never adduced in the Gospels as 'portents' or as 'evidence' of Divinity or Divine agency. Such a conception is wholly foreign to the Apostolic story, and, where it obtains, has been read into the New Testament by the people who deal with 'Christian evidences' as if they had been called to the Bar. In all cases the miracles attributed to Christ are so recorded that they seem to flow out of His Personality in some abnormally 'natural' manner. And with this conception coincides the best early Christian thought on the subject. For example, St. Augustine: 'We call those things "miracles" which God does

out of the usual course of nature *as known to us.*<sup>1</sup> Or, again; 'According to human usage things are said to be against nature which are only against the *course of nature as known to us.*'<sup>2</sup> Here St. Augustine shows a firm grip of the fact that the mechanical is an entirely 'subjective' department, and that the *whole* order of nature, to which 'miracles' belong is the sphere of free personal being, to which 'miracles' stand related.

But an even more surprisingly modern note is caught beneath the scholastic language of St. Thomas Aquinas :

'We wonder when we see an event and do not know its cause. And because one and the same event is sometimes known to some and unknown to others, it happens that of the witnesses of the effect some wonder, and some do not wonder. An astronomer, for example, does not wonder at seeing an eclipse of the sun, at which a person who is ignorant of astronomy cannot help wondering (in the sense of being startled and surprised). An event is wonderful, then, relatively to one man and not to another. The absolutely wonderful is that which has a cause absolutely hidden. This, then, is the meaning of the word "miracle," an event, of itself, full of wonder, not to this man or to that only. Now the cause absolutely hidden from every man is God, inasmuch as no man in this life can mentally grasp the essence of God. Those events, then, are properly to be styled "miraculous" which happen by

<sup>1</sup> *De Civitate Dei*, xxi. iii.

<sup>2</sup> *Contra Faustum*, xxvi. iii.

Divine Power beyond the order commonly observed in nature.'<sup>1</sup>

This belongs to the history of the term 'miracle' which we agreed to neglect. It is, however, necessary to remind readers that both what we have termed the 'older' and the modern conception have strayed from the track marked out by the Church, which would still seem to have the advantage over the modernists of being rational.<sup>2</sup>

In fact there is nothing in the view here put forward that ought to be in the least strange to Christian thought. It is only another way of putting what was stated ages ago by the Fathers of the Church. This may seem to many readers a trifling consideration; it is, however, of great importance in one respect: viz. as showing the departure of Christian thought, influenced by a 'mechanical Deism,' from Paley's time onwards to a date very near our own. And it is quite idle for criticism to hold up the ideas characteristic of that period as representing the doctrine or even opinion of the Church. The Church has never taught that miracles are 'interventions,' exercising 'control over the laws of nature,' for the purpose of evidencing the Divinity or Divine approval of their agent. The only object gained in framing such a definition is to register a form of error which

<sup>1</sup> *Summa contra Gentiles*, III. ci.

<sup>2</sup> See Illingworth, *The Divine Immanence*, pp. 94 ff.

held current about a hundred and fifty years, and unfortunately so penetrated the popular mind that the man in the street does not know a miracle when he sees it ! In a work of reference of European reputation it is absolutely indefensible.

§ 9. *The Personal Miracle of Response in Christ*

The purpose of this attempt to state the miraculous is to accustom the mind to the place the subject holds in relation to the supreme Response to the religious instinct. As was said at the outset, Christianity rests, and for ever will rest, on the miraculous.

In Christ we have the Incarnation of that free Personal Being of Whose Will the whole order of nature is *an* expression. Nothing less than this will satisfy the Christian faith, or indeed the very existence of Christianity as Response.

To-day numbers of persons profess themselves ready to accept a 'human Jesus,' divested of what they regard—wholly without ground for doing so—as 'legendary accretions.' They think that when they delete the miraculous, it is the 'Divinity' of Christ they get rid of. *It is the whole conception, the whole historic Figure.* Let them take the trouble to go through the whole Gospel account, erasing every word, action, or characteristic which is attended by the miraculous, *to the extent of being dependent on the same evidence*, and they will find

by the end of their task that Christ has for all practical purposes vanished from the record. Every one of the abnormal occurrences brings out some feature essential to the portrait, and so rife is the history with these that if the mere presence of the miraculous invalidated belief we should have no other course than to relegate Christ to a place among the world's myths.

Some are already doing so. The fact is sufficiently sad to anyone who believes that the world's religious consciousness is interpreted and met in Christ, and yet it need not be the disturbing factor which some people seem to feel it.<sup>1</sup> The world will never be persuaded that Christ is a myth. Persons not ridden by an obsession will take the New Testament documents and say, 'Here are certain abnormal facts, attaching to a Person Who is Himself unique in personality; they must be accepted notwithstanding the strain they may put upon mere credulity, and we must follow where they lead.' If this is not the truly scientific state of mind for the inquirer to cultivate, all we have learnt of methods of investigation goes for nothing.

It was at any rate in this spirit that the 'eye-witnesses' received Christ at the first. It was in this spirit that they began their mission by witnessing

<sup>1</sup> As regards the historicity of Christ the reader is recommended to read *Jesus Christ, Historical or Mythical*, by Thomas James Thornburn, D.D., LL.D., a reply to Professor Drews' *Die Christusmythe* (T. & T. Clark).

to the Resurrection. They did not publish it as a prodigy attesting the Divinity of their Master. They began with it for the simple reason that it afforded the best type, so to speak, of that atmosphere, part human, part Divine, through which men could alone see and approach the Lover of their souls. Here, they cried in effect, is a new spiritual departure in the life of man ; here is ' that Eternal Life ' at once the revelation and the medium of the Desire of all nations. The Personal Being by which Christ is risen from the dead *is* the Power by which we rise into communion with the Author of our being and enter into the fulness of life.

The announcement did not take the shape of a graduated scheme of instruction. It was an explosion of triumph. That is why the Apostles did not begin, as is the mistaken tendency of many to-day, with the conception of an ' ordinary ' human character and gradually work up to the realisation of a Divine Christ. As Christ had given *them* their personality in revealing the Divine, they yielded Him at once the full credit of His claim. The Resurrection was the most ' elementary ' fact about Him. Anything less ' miraculous ' would have been, considering the full and perfect Response they had to proclaim, an absolute bathos. It would have been like lighting a candle to look at the sun.



§ 10. *The Problem of the Cross*

Before, however, we can consider the Response as a whole, it is necessary to revert to the question which arose in the previous chapter, viz., How was it that a Divine Response came to be so long delayed, and why, in the process of its articulation should it have been obscured by so much that is strange and fantastic in the history of the race?

The answer to this question arises out of the conditions of the whole human problem. We shall consider it in the following chapter. But there is another question closely akin to it which ought to be asked and answered oftener than it is. How was it that Christ, in placing Himself at our free human disposal, came to be crucified? If the onus of explaining the delay in the Response lies with the Christian, the onus of explaining the rejection of that Response when it did appear lies no less with the critics of Christianity. Few of those who ask, Why was the Incarnation so long delayed? ever think of setting themselves the fearful problem of Calvary. And yet the one question is part of the other. Let the latter stand out before us in all its naked ugliness—the ugliest fact, in its implication on the race, in all history. How is it that the Response awoke in the hearts

of those immediately concerned, not the welcome which the study of the religious instinct would lead us to expect, but a passionate hatred, a wanton destructiveness, without parallel in the tragedies of time?

## VI

### Estrangement

Sin separates a man from his ideal ; sin separates a man from men. But the most awful separation of all that reaches the very heart of loneliness is this, that sin separates a man from his God.—G. H. MORRISON. W

If we are lost, no victor else has destroyed us ;  
It is by ourselves that we go down to eternal night.

WALT WHITMAN. /

The sense of sin is the centre of all Christian ethics. Now this, I believe, is an attitude becoming increasingly unreal to most serious men. Christianity insists upon the essential weakness of man. It allows him no strength, save what is derived from somewhere else, from Jesus Christ.—LOWES DICKINSON, *Hibbert Journal*, May 1909. Wm

§ 1. Delay in response apparent only. § 2. Sin a fact as well as a doctrine. § 3. The non-ethical character of sin. § 4. Sin, like miracle, related to being rather than to law. § 5. The problem of the Cross. § 6. The personal agency of evil. § 7. The fall. § 8. The fall, and the parable of the fall. § 9. The Christian Determinists. § 10. Where their theory breaks down. § 11. Is the sense of sin 'morbid' ? § 12. The fact of sin belongs to the spiritual order.

#### § 1. *Delay in Response apparent only*

WHEN we begin to learn a new language we find it is not only our speech that needs training, but the ear as well. Our attempts at pronunciation are ludicrous because we misconceive the sounds made by those who speak the language correctly. |

It is this fact that is directing the attention of teachers of languages more and more to the importance of aural training.

Now something of this kind holds good of man's spiritual condition, only in a very much deeper as well as more widespread sense. It has been asked how it is that the Response to his consciousness and desire was so long delayed, and why, in process of articulation, it should take such strange and even revolting shape. The answer is that there was no postponement at all, but only an imaginary one, and that the same 'aural defect' that produced the illusion of postponement is also responsible for all that has been repulsive or grotesque in the history of worship. Not until ages had elapsed could humanity exclaim: 'Mine ear hast Thou opened,' and not even yet have we been penetrated by the 'silences' of the Spirit, nor learned—though it has been given some to hear—'as it were a new song.' The Response, that is to say, though taking place all the time, could not reach man as it left God, because man, in making it his own, was continually mispronouncing it.

The problem is: To what is this spiritual deficiency due? We must admit that it cannot point to a normal state of things. That the ear should require training before a perfect accent can be attained is only on a par with the struggle which attends all adjustment, but the aural defect of the

soul points to something deeper. It is more on a par with the incapacity of a child to pronounce *its own* tongue. For the religious instincts of man show very clearly that he is *naturally* religious, and therefore there ought never to have been any interval between him and the God in Whom we live and move and have our being. As it is the whole history of man shows him to be like the child who is growing up unable to speak his own tongue, because of an organic defect in the organs of speech. He 'cannot order his speech by reason of darkness.' This defect is commonly known by the name of Sin.

It is significant that the Christian Creed passes at once from asserting our consciousness of God and His claim upon us to the Person and Passion of Christ, tacitly assuming the dark background of sin as furnished by the experience of every human heart. In this the Creed follows strictly the method of Christ, Who never once goes out of His way to demonstrate a condition so entirely obvious as that confessed in almost the same terms by Ovid and Saul of Tarsus. He offers 'rest,' He offers 'life,' He offers 'obedience,' He offers 'Heaven,' to those who know themselves to be restless, lifeless, lawless, Heavenless. And he assumes this knowledge throughout. He assumes the fact of Sin, as it made itself felt in the dawn of personality among the Hebrews, as it was expounded and driven home

by the Holy Spirit in the preaching of the Apostles. No one can read His parables, or the account of His ordinary converse with men, without perceiving that to Christ sin is a very real breach of the Divine order, a personal outrage against a personal Father and Friend. To quell that outrage, to fill up that breach, He placed Himself, His Divine Personality, in the line of man's desire, and called on men to re-centre their love upon Him, and by so doing find the long desired union with God.

In other words Christ came miraculously to remove that organic defect which impeded man's efforts after the language of his native Heaven. He came to unstop the deaf ear and unloose the tongue of him that was dumb. It is most significant that the whole language about the purpose of Christ's coming, prophetic and historic, is thrown into a form that assumes man to be in a defective, that is, abnormal state. He comes to those who are not merely imperfect, as though to encourage a more rapid development, but to those who are diseased in order by healing and restoration to render them *capable* of development.

### § 2. *Sin a Fact as well as a Doctrine*

We live in a day when men put a great deal of quiet stress on duty and honour, and are ready to admit and correct offences against their various social and 'caste' codes, and yet when the very

mention of the word 'sin' seems to provoke impatience, as a relic of superstition, the figment of an 'incredible' theology. And yet is there any other explanation of our anomalous spiritual condition which will cover all the facts?

That there are a number of non-Christian explanations of this condition, the reader will not need reminding. The evolutionist, the pantheist, the sociologist, the æsthete—each has his theory to bring to bear on the subject, and often the result is so specious that it looks as if a quite new interpretation were placed on the facts, and all the old mystic and spiritual elements belonging to the religious doctrine of sin were so much lumber. And, truth to tell, these modern theories—or rather ancient guesses served up in modern style, for they are nothing else—do come wonderfully near hitting off each some one *aspect* of the matter. Where they fail to satisfy the inquirer is that they none of them tell us why sin is sin, that is to say, in what it really consists. On the other hand the Christian doctrine, which we are so ready to fling away as obsolete, covers all these aspects of the matter, and at the same time goes beyond all the explanations which secular thought derives from them. Take the explanation, e.g. put forward by the 'naturalistic' school; Christianity agrees with this so far as to pronounce sin an inherited evil, but at the same time it asserts that the 'nature'

so inherited is abnormal, and, shaking off the hideous nightmare of Determinism, it sees in the 'natural man' a spiritual prisoner, to whom it offers release. Or, do we, with the social evolutionist, regard sin as the intrusion of selfishness on the general welfare? So does religion, but refuses to *identify* sin with selfishness, revealing an absolute ethic as the true basis of altruism. Or, again, do we look upon sin as a failure to meet life's liabilities? Here, again, religion has ever regarded it as a 'missing of the mark,' yet at the same time reveals that mark as the claims of God upon our life, and appeals for confirmation to the consciousness within us, that consciousness which is at the root of the instinct of approach and sacrifice. Or, once more, do we, with the æsthetic school, interpret sin as a displacement of the balance of capacity, an interruption of the beauty and rhythm of life's forces? Religion, both before the Incarnation and since, has insisted on this aspect, though for a very different reason from that of the æsthete, not because of the holiness of Beauty, but because of the beauty of Holiness.

In short, what Christian doctrine offers is an interpretation of sin which covers every inch of the ground taken by independent thinkers to-day and in the past, but goes beyond them in supplying the one element for lack of which every other account fails to satisfy human experience. For



the Christian doctrine is that sin is a personal estrangement of ourselves from God.

Suppose we had never heard of this explanation, suppose it had not worn threadbare with frequent iteration and disbelief, should we not infer that our instinctive desire to live as we approve must belong to a habit long since broken, a character long since deranged, and now followed, so far as it is followed at all, with great difficulty? Is not this exactly how our professors teach us to reason about those rudimentary organs and habits the use and object of which are so puzzling till we come to interpret them in the light of a completed development? Is not this exactly how the finest minds of Athens and Rome did come to interpret their impotent desire to live as they approved,—as the rudiment of a broken habit, the ‘voice’ of a ‘law’ overridden by rebellion, a voice which, though they could not tell Whose it was, nor to what end it was uttered, once had, they believed, our whole audience, our entire allegiance, and though now a still voice and small, was yet so audible, so incisive!

Sin, then, as a fact of human life, exists apart altogether from revelation. It did not need Christianity to tell men that sin is wrong, but it did need Christianity to tell us wrong is sin. In other words, men saw that they broke laws and lived as they could not approve; what puzzled them

was *why* they did so. It did not matter what was the standard, they were invariably coming short of it. 'All sin,' says the Apostle, summing up human experience, 'is lawlessness'—not a deliberate desire to do wickedly according to any given ethical standard, but the want, spiritually speaking, of a centre of gravity, a sort of organic wantonness. Being ignorant of the cause of this, they could not know the remedy. As a matter of fact, it was the Remedy that revealed the cause. Man could not see sin until he had in some sense seen God. To the Jew, in the dawn of personality, God was partially revealed, and the mere glimpse of Holiness elicited by unerring instinct a *personal* account of sin: 'Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned.' Such was the confession of one whose sin,<sup>1</sup> nowadays, would be said to consist entirely in wrong against his fellows. The sinner knew better. It was the personal fact of God that taught him. And when in Christ man actually saw and touched and handled the Word of Life, the personal nature of sin became overwhelmingly plain. Henceforth love and sin became the antitheta of religious experience. It was the interposition of Christ in the path of our desire, with its amazing result of re-birth of character and life, that showed men what the root of the trouble really was, and so gave rise to that doctrine of sin, first developed by St. John and St.

<sup>1</sup> Ps. li; cf. 2 Samuel xi., xii. 13, 14.

Paul, which reveals sin as estrangement from God, who is the object of all love, desire, and life.

Nowadays, when belief in a personal God has been sublimated to 'the organic conception,' sin begins, even with highly moral teachers, to lose its sinfulness. The morality of the teachers, however, may be left out of the question. Ethically, they are without reproach, but sin is in no way a deduction from ethics. Here, again, the utilitarian estimate of religion has misled us.

### § 3. *The non-ethical Character of Sin*

Probably the concluding words of the last section and the heading of the present one will seem something of a paradox. When, however, we reflect that the child's love for its parent is totally distinct from what it thinks is the parent's wish, we shall acknowledge the justice of the paradox. It is not the broken law that constitutes sin, but the lack of love for, the want of 'rapport' with, the parent-goodness, the moral ignorance of our estranged condition. To say this is not to disparage law. With the Apostle we may say devoutly that 'the law is just and good.' Yet the fact that man in all stages of his life on earth has always had law, even if only the 'taboo' of savage races, and yet has been ignorant of the real nature of sin, shows how little ethical considerations have to do with the subject, except as indications of man's impotence.

‘When the law came,’ the Apostle confesses, ‘sin revived, and I died.’ Why did he ‘die’? Because he had not learned to say, ‘Christ is my life.’ And if the law that ‘came,’ had not happened to be that given on Sinai, his experience would have been practically the same. Under a very different code Ovid passed under the same death-sentence :

‘Video meliora proboque  
Deteriora sequor.’

It is necessary to insist on this point to-day, because of the widespread idea that sin *consists* in disobedience. We owe this idea indirectly to the utility aspect of religion, viz. that the one aim of religion is the production of approved conduct, that it is ‘morality touched with emotion,’ that it is an asset in the regulation of states—a magnificent object, truly, to have motivated the age-long struggle of instinct, the diminution of rates on the abolition of policemen! Law is a social necessity so long as men continue together, but sin exists in man’s most solitary moments, and apart altogether from the evil it chances to inflict on our fellow-man. The only right attitude towards sin is that taken by the king of old time. If ever man could have identified sin with broken law, it was David when he had killed Uriah after seducing his wife, and yet his confession ignores altogether the outraged moral code, and exclaims :

‘Against Thee and Thee only have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight.’ The sin *consisted* in the desire being alienated from God; the love, the life had wandered from their centre in Him,—the rest was consequence, terrible, it is true, yet in a certain profound sense, superficial merely.

§ 4. *Sin, like Miracle, related to Being rather than to Law*

The fact of sin, then, for all it is lawlessness, stands related rather to being than to law. And here it does not require a very acute intelligence to detect a close analogy between sin and miracle. Both are connected with law, so far as outward observation goes, yet both reveal law as something arbitrary; in the one connection, a statement of the sequences of nature as they strike the observation, in the other a system of restraint built up, for the most part, out of social convenience. In regard to the former, miracle is the exception which reveals the normal freedom of the universe; in regard to the latter, sin is the violation revealing a freedom, abused indeed, but none the less a freedom capable, because free, of being re-centred upon the object of its desire. And if sin is the abnormal condition of spiritual nature, it follows that it must result in abnormal consequences all along the line. Man’s slow and blundering instinct is abnormal. The seeming aloofness of the Divine Response

is abnormal. The strange forms which that response has seemed to take, and the terrible abuses attendant on man's own response to it—all these spell a rift in the union of God and man, of spirit and Creator. This then is what sin is in its essence, not the commission of particular acts, not an ignorance of law, or a deliberate love of evil, but a dislocation of a Divine order, an estrangement of man from the Object of his consciousness and desire.

### § 5. *The Problem of the Cross*

This account is further confirmed by the fact that when at length the Response culminated in Christ, it was received, not with welcome, but with crucifixion. The Cross has ever been the measure of man's estrangement. Setting aside for a moment the Incarnation, regarding Christ as merely a 'good man,' the tragedy of Calvary would still be as great an evidence of that estrangement. In it we are confronted with the fact that when a good man came amongst us, and spent himself in doing good, loving the meanest and most wretched, healing our diseases, and speaking words of life and health, he was done to death in the most painful and shameful way we could devise. Is not this very amazing? What sort of reflection does it cast upon the race? If Christ's death was no more than the death of a

good and great man who fell a martyr to the corrupt standards of the day, it is difficult to see how we could escape a conclusion of utter despair and cynicism! For in that case it would mean that mankind rejected the best chance it ever had. The only thing that saves Calvary from being the proof-text of pessimism is the Divine over-ruling with which it was invested by Christ Himself. So regarded, Calvary becomes the measure of human estrangement from Light, Love, Truth,—in one word, from God.

### § 6. *The Personal Agency of Evil*

Objection to the Christian account of sin is most frequently taken on the score of its involving the doctrines of the Fall and of the personal agency of evil. It is difficult to see why these should prove an objection in a day when the tendency of our conceptions is to become more and more 'personal,' and when such facts as the solidarity of the race and the reality of free response are so prominently before us. Let us briefly consider these doctrines in their modern light, taking that of the personal agency of evil first.

Granted the persistence of personality, which modern psychophysics tends to establish,<sup>1</sup> what is there incredible in the idea of immortal beings

<sup>1</sup> See Sir Oliver Lodge's article in *Harper's Magazine*, August 1908.

influencing those at present confined to this life? May they not be supposed to have as ready an access to the soul, and as powerful a magnetism over it, as any form of influence recognised in ordinary human converse? The really extraordinary thing—once we come to think of it—is that two persons should be able to influence each other at all! How is it done? And how do we explain the facts of telepathy and hypnotism? How do we explain any class of influence that is independent of physical contact? And if there are immortal influences at work upon us as well as those located on this planet, why should they not be malignant as well as beneficent? Let us suppose that at death a man's spirit goes forth into the wider activities of a sphere unfettered by bodily conditions, but is still moving self-centred, and bent on frustrating the Love of God, what is to hinder this spirit from drawing near, a restless, spiteful, malignant influence, tempting and perhaps ruining the souls that still have their portion in this life? If the human spirit is imperishable, and all mankind is really *one*, it is impossible but that much of the evil as well as much of the good produced on this planet should be the outcome of such purely spiritual influence. The Catholic instinct which asks for the aid of the saints is surely a sound one. But if the aid of the good be real, the injury, or at least the menace, of the evil must be real also.



Let us take another step in our supposition ; are human beings the only creatures of reason and will in existence ? Did created personal existence begin with the birth of man on this little earth ? Are there no vaster issues involved in the mystery of life than those which immediately concern ourselves ? Is the whole drama of spiritual life self-contained on this human stage ? And if not, if the unity of the human race is but a part of a vaster spiritual organism, the struggle and destiny of which is hidden from the eye of sense, then surely the belief in the personal agency of both good and evil is reasonable and almost inevitable.

If this were a mere speculation, with no more warrant than that it explains certain phenomena too obscure for our present science of mind, it would not be one to be lightly laid aside, but the fact that it is a part of all that has come to us through the development of the Reponse to our religious instinct gives it a commanding place in our conceptions. For one thing, the teaching, works, and whole attitude of Christ are embedded, as it were, in this conception of evil. It is impossible to ignore or deny it without rejecting Christ as the authoritative Teacher. Even the Christian reader may be insufficiently aware how vital a part of his religion is this attribution of evil to personal agency. Christ's words are unmistakable : ' The evil one ' (St. Matthew vi. 13, R.V.), the ' Prince of this world '

(St. John xii. 31, xiv. 30, xvi. 11), 'Satan' (St. Matthew iv. 10). The conception is interwoven with the Lord's Prayer, with the Temptation, with the works of healing, the parables, the discourses, the incidental expressions of Christ's mind. It can hardly be said to be a part of His revelation, since it is as much a part of man's original equipment as the consciousness of God, but He certainly accepted and confirmed it, and it took more and more prominence as the spiritual life of man went on. St. Paul assumes it throughout,<sup>1</sup> St. John speaks of the whole world as 'lying in the Evil One' (1 St. John v. 19) and affirms that the Son of God is manifested to destroy the works of the Evil One' (iii. 18). Physical evil of all kinds is attributed to personal agency, such as death, disease, sorrow, pain (Hebrews xi. 14, Acts x. 38). It is difficult to understand how any professing Christians can obscure as they often do this vital point in their faith.

In fact religion constantly reminds us that man is only a part of a vast society. It corrects our racial egoism by lifting the veil which conceals from the sense-vision innumerable orders of beings, creatures constituted in the same freedom, and therefore liable to 'fall' by their own desire, to forsake their orbit in the Life and Love of God, to be 'very far gone from original righteousness.'

<sup>1</sup> See Lightfoot on the passage in Eph. ii. 2, on 'the Prince of the Power of the Air.'

What matter the names of these beings, or their description, or destiny? They are invisible, but they are like ourselves, horribly and intimately like ourselves. They also 'kept not their first estate.' They preceded man in spiritual apostasy. They abused the freedom which is part of their nature as personal beings, and having departed from God persuaded man to become estranged from Him also.

Religion is sometimes said by the sceptic to be the reflex of man's self-importance. This is one of the many self-contradictions of sceptical criticism, for, while despising religion for making man of such tremendous concern, the sceptic acknowledges no higher creatures, and so makes man supreme. Religion does make man of tremendous concern, and at the same time thrusts him off the kerb in the crowded tracks of being. While revealing him as the object of a boundless love, religion assigns him his true place in the scale of creation. There are other beings besides him, for there were other beings before him. Thus religion raises our conception of the society of created beings to a scale of awful grandeur. It suggests that vaster issues depend on the struggle of humanity towards Light, Life, and Love than any which are disclosed on this visible stage. The whole drama of the spiritual life is expanded, and man is quickened by a larger atmosphere. The sceptical mind,

rejecting this revelation, loses in spiritual vigour by its very self-absorption. It is committed to a race-egoism which is as deleterious to spiritual progress as the egoism of the individual is to social progress. For it is a notable fact that at such times as belief in the personal agency of evil has weakened, the Christian morale has deteriorated. The converse of 'Resist the Devil and he will flee from you' seems to have proved itself, 'Classify the Devil and he will cling to you.'

### § 7. *The Fall*

The second modern objection to the doctrine of sin is connected with the origin of evil in man, or what is known as the Fall. Put in plain terms, it is this: How can man be said to have 'fallen' when he has been rising all the time? Before Evolution came to be accepted as the means by which man arrived at his present status in the organic world, there was no difficulty in the belief in a fall from a height of intellectual perfection and of a life supernaturally endowed with all things required for the satisfaction of every need. At least in the popular sense,<sup>1</sup> man was conceived

<sup>1</sup> The popular sense, however, greatly exaggerated the Church's teaching. Man is represented (Gen. ii., iii.) as having been only a little superior in his material conditions to the beasts from among whom he had recently emerged. Nor have we, in those passages, nor elsewhere in the Bible, or among the Fathers, any indication that what man suffered in the Fall was anything but a *spiritual* change.

as having been created perfect, hence the present undeniable state of imperfection necessitated some such belief as that expressed in the Fall. Once however the theory was admitted that man is the result of a long process of development, and very serious modifications, to say the least, became necessary in the statement of the origin of sin. The difficulty is a very real one.

Nevertheless, it is not insuperable. The candid inquirer will do well to bear in mind, (a) that the Fall is not an isolated doctrine, standing or falling by its inherent reasonableness alone—it is a part of a connected spiritual system, the greater portion of which is directly confirmed by human experience ; and (b) that while the theory of evolution is accepted generally as at least the best ‘working hypothesis’<sup>2</sup> of creation yet forthcoming, there is very much in connection with man which that theory leaves in obscurity. The Christian thinker can have no desire to quarrel with the theory. If anything has been proved beyond dispute, it is the possibility of a complete harmony between the doctrine of the Church and the belief that the process and method by which the world has been brought into the form it now bears are correctly and conveniently described by the term ‘Evolution.’ But while we recognise this, we are bound also to recognise that the evil of which we have direct personal experience is not explained by any ‘survival

of brute instinct.' That experience points so clearly to the consequences of a misplaced love and desire that the antecedent probability is all in favour of some 'aboriginal catastrophe' by which man's once direct communion with the Author of his life was plunged into estrangement, so that the only survivals of that communion for many ages were the consciousness and desire we have been examining.

But how are we to harmonise this with the 'upward tendency'? To begin with, is it so certain that evolution does express an 'upward tendency'? It doubtless expresses an increased complexity, and, in the direction of intellectual faculty, an advance. But does either increased complexity or mental power constitute a standard for judging the entire process? Have we, apart from what is 'revealed' of man's spiritual destiny, a standard adequate for pronouncing on the entire process? It would, of course, involve a vicious circle were we to attempt to measure progress here by a standard which involves the very doctrine we are now examining; but it is as well to remind ourselves that apart from that spiritual standard we have nothing that professes to be a criterion by which to judge whether evolution spells advance or no. The true 'upward tendency' may have been, for all science tells us to the contrary, a direct gift, an addition like that of a 'sixth sense' to those

faculties which have perhaps been the outcome of development. In that case there seems to be nothing to hinder belief in a spiritual sense alienated from its true life of communion with God, and self-sunken into a condition rather demoniac than animal.

When we find beneath the remains of glacial Europe traces of animal life, and sub-tropical flora, we do not say : These cannot have flourished where they are now found, since the whole of Europe has been emerging from a condition of ice. On the contrary, we accept their existence as proving that there has been a pre-glacial period when conditions were wholly favourable to the animal and plant life whose remains we find there. Is there not similarly in mankind a hidden florescence and manhood which oblige us to look beyond the ' glacial epoch ' of estrangement to a time favourable to nobler and richer life ?

### § 8. *The Fall, and the Parable of the Fall*

One fruitful cause of the difficulty which the Fall seems to present is that persons do not distinguish between the *fact* of the Fall and the way that fact is presented to us through the medium of early tradition, Hebrew and other. The precise *means* by which the estrangement was brought about must be, comparatively speaking, a negligible detail, and a belief in the Fall does not necessarily involve the believer in a literal acceptance of the

account in Genesis. Here, as elsewhere, what the Christian apologist is always having to contend with is not so much modern thought as ancient thought, viz. the arrest of their religious thinking which people seem to undergo in their teens. Most of us drop our thinking when we leave school, and then, when we chance to be reminded of the Fall in some religious book, or in church, all we call to mind is 'the story of Adam and Eve and the apple,' in the crude literalness by which it impressed itself upon our childhood's imagination. Of course if we will bring into the sphere of adult spirituality the necessary puerilities of the Catechism the rejection of religion is a foregone conclusion! There is, however, nothing that calls for the perpetuation of the *mode* of the Fall in our adult outfit of beliefs. St. Paul may refer to the third chapter of Genesis, and make use of the terms 'first and second Adam,' in illustrating the fact of the universality of sin; but the fact that he adopted that method of exposition is no proof that he would have required his illustration to be taken as a statement of historic fact. We may do full justice to the language he uses with regard to the second Adam without insisting that belief in the actual circumstances of Genesis iii. is an integral part of Pauline theology.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Rom. v. and 1 Cor. xv. 'What St. Paul is really concerned to do is to impress upon his readers certain important



At the same time it is by no means intended that Genesis iii. may be dismissed as a legend wholly wide of the truth. All that is here urged is that its literal acceptance need not stand as a barrier to an intelligent belief in the Fall. It is probable indeed that the precise mode of the Fall could only be expressed under the form of parable, and the actual significance of Genesis iii. is one which the Eastern mind instantly recognises. The subject is well summed up in a letter by Dean Church :

‘The fact of what is meant by original sin is as mysterious and inexplicable as the origin of evil, but it is obviously as much a *fact*. There is a fault and vice in the *race*, which, given time, as surely develops into actual sin, as our physical constitution, given at birth, does into sickness and physical death.’<sup>1</sup>

### § 9. *The Christian Determinists*

It is well to remember that the religion which revealed wrong as sin, revealed also the *cause* of sin, and that to reject the cause is to reject the whole revelation of sin of which the cause is an integral

truths concerning the work of *Christ* in redemption. It is to the Person of the *Second Adam* that he would direct their attention ; and his reference to the first Adam seems to be for that purpose only. He wants to lay stress on the universality of the work of Christ in relation to all men without distinction of race, and this he can best do by comparing Him with the reputed progenitor of the whole human family.’ (From an unpublished paper by Canon Joyce.)

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Letters*, p. 248.

part. There is a school of thinkers to-day—nominally Christian—whose apparent inability to accept the fact of the Fall amounts in reality to nothing less than a rejection of the doctrine of sin as estrangement from God. Briefly stated, the theory of these writers amounts to this: that sin has originated in the conflict between the animal nature and the moral reason. It is extraordinary that the writers in question should not see that their theory is really no more than a *statement of the conditions*, physical and psychical, under which the fact of sin has gradually manifested itself, and that such conditions can never become the *explanation* of the fact. However, they seem to be oblivious of this very simple distinction, and each year sees an addition to the literature of the theory.

The theory has this very serious objection at the outset: it supposes that man's 'physical nature' and 'moral reason' have been set in antagonism by the Creator for the ends of the education of the race. This can mean nothing else than that sin is a part of His Will, the long working-out of a pre-determined plan. In other words the theory makes God responsible for every sin ever committed. It goes without saying that such an idea does away with human responsibility at a stroke, and therefore with penitence. As a matter of fact, however, penitence is not a characteristic doctrine of the school in question. One of its members has

frankly and approvingly told us that 'the higher man is not worrying about his sins.' No one with any experience of his fellow men will believe that statement for a moment, but if it were true, and if sin were a part of the necessary 'education of the race,' then of course no one could blame a man, whether he were 'higher' or lower, for not worrying.

The really amazing thing is how the exponents of this Christian determinism—if the paradox be admissible—can continue to believe in Christ's revelation of God. When one reflects on the consequences of sin even in one individual, it would seem the last thing conceivable that a God Whose Nature is Love should *appoint* such an awful experience as a mode of 'moral' education. Of the two possibilities—were we restricted to them—it were surely far more loyal to the highest we know to reject the existence of God altogether than to believe in this monstrosity of modernism. Philosophic determinism were far preferable, for that shuts us up to the operation of mere blind force, and pitiable as our condition would be, were such credible, we should at least be saved the horrible reflection that moral evil and suffering are the result of deliberate intelligence. Better to conceive of man as the victim of a blind conspiracy to crush him, than as the pupil of an educational system whose methods consist in devilish torture.

Happily, however, it is only modernist speculation

that suggests these horrible alternatives. The human instinct revolts from both alike, and confesses in every system it has produced, in every sin it has committed, in every act of penitence placed on record, that the fault is its own. The prodigal's cry relieves the Father of all responsibility for the sin and the shame, and raises our hearts in wonder at the marvellous way in which the Lover of the soul has made the estrangement work out a path of restoration and reunion. It is one thing to say that sin is a factor in the restoration of man, after he had lapsed by a deliberate abuse of his own freedom ; it is another thing altogether to say that man *had* to learn from the first by sinning, and that he never had any other choice. The very genius of Christianity is Redemption, but redemption means nothing if man has not forfeited a condition of purity and love which it is of the utmost moment to him to recover.

§ 10. *Where their Theory breaks down*

The inherent weakness of this theory consists in the fact that it leaves us without any ground of moral appeal. Ultimately it is forced back upon evolutionary ethics for its moral sanction, as well as its history of conduct, and here it shares the barrenness of all ethical method where the elemental facts of life are concerned. The mere fact, if fact it were, that sin is an expression of

animal propensity 'inconvenient' to the social welfare goes nowhere with the man who may quite reasonably retort that animal propensity is not inconvenient to him. If he is told in reply that he is bound to set the social welfare above his own enjoyment, it is open to him to ask, Why? And it will be a long time before evolutionary ethics can meet the question. The present assumption of the greatest good of the greatest number,—roughly speaking—is a pure assumption unsupported by anything we know of the 'progress' of the race.<sup>1</sup> If he is told that only in the general welfare can he realise his higher self, conduct is made to turn upon pure self-regard, and he may pertinently reply that he prefers to chose for himself which direction his self-regard shall take. When ethicists exhort us to virtue on the ground that we can best realise ourselves in the good of others they are on precisely the same ground as the man who feels he can best realise himself in robbing others and giving rein to his lusts. The only difference is one of opinion. The thing looks fantastic enough as a philosophy, and yet it is precisely on this ground that Nietzsche has

<sup>1</sup> It scarcely needs saying that the author is not identifying himself with the doctrine of the superman. All that is meant is that the development of the race, so far as we can gather, has not been advanced by 'ballot,' but by the interposition of strong individuals who have often proved to be gifted with a supreme force of good and right.

pronounced all regard for the welfare of others a species of insanity. As a working hypothesis, it is said by certain optimistic pragmatists not to work, and yet it is the tacit assumption of every cheat and hooligan in slum and office. From the standpoint of non-Catholic ethics, and of the modernist substitute for the doctrine of sin, it is simply unanswerable.

While a long course of Christian education has disposed us to view selfishness as wrong, there is no guarantee that such a view is permanent. Indeed there are not wanting signs that with the decline of a spiritual faith magnanimity is passing out of conduct, and its place is being taken by a tacit agreement that every man should do what is right in his own eyes, limited only by a stringent civil code. The almost entire change of ethical front to-day from that of, say, fifty years ago, is largely due to the hasty generalisations which are characteristic of the time, and of which the theory we have been examining is every way typical. On the one hand, the Christian doctrine of sin has become discredited, no one can really say why, except that it is no longer the fashion; on the other hand, the fact that legal morality is to some extent the result of social expediency has taken such hold upon us that we leap to the conclusion that social expediency is the ultimate sanction of moral right. The only criticism that

can be passed on the modern theory of sin is that it arises out of an incomplete account of human nature. The outlook, if this theory goes on gaining a hold on the public mind, is a very grave one.

§ 11. *Is the Sense of Sin ' morbid ' ?*

Diffused throughout much of our literature to-day there seems to be a notion that the ' sense of sin ' is a morbid symptom. The dictum of one prominent thinker that ' nowadays the ordinary man does not worry about his sins ' has already been referred to. The abysmal ignorance of the aristocracy of intellect whenever it comes down to the level of the ' ordinary man ' is not unrelieved by the humour that of old attended the sophists when they passed into the market-place. It seems a great pity that these *extraordinary* persons should not avail themselves of a little first-hand observation. A few weeks passed in association with some busy parish priest would very quickly dispel an illusion which seems to have crystallised in the laboratory. If the ordinary man were not worrying about his sins there would not be the demand there is for the works of those authors who undertake to disconnect faith from repentance and proclaim as their gospel that there is no need of a Gospel. The very anxiety of the ordinary man to hear the latest thing about his spiritual condition is proof positive that he is ' worrying

about his sins.' It is quite true that he may not be doing this in the systematic and hopeful way which some proper guidance would help him to do. It is not every unhealthy man who goes in for proper medical treatment. But every unhealthy man is bound to be conscious of his lack of health. Something is the matter with him, and his being unable to give it a name does not in the least lessen either the fact or his worry about it. The illustration may aptly meet the objection above referred to, that the sense of sin is a morbid symptom. The sense of sin is 'morbid' exactly as anxiety about health is 'morbid.' Anxiety about health may be 'morbid' when there is no ground for it, and that is just where the fallacy of the philosopher lies. He thinks we are all healthy, and makes a brave noise and flourish to keep up the illusion. But though he were to shout till the Day of Judgment, he would not succeed in making us think so, because we know we are not healthy. Disease tells the truth, and our want of ease, of fundamental, spiritual ease, refutes the gay day-dream of the sophist. And when disease does speak, it is not at all 'morbid' to be anxious about health. On the contrary it is the most common-sense line we can take—provided we follow it up with a consultation and the proper remedies. In other words, the sense of sin is but the reverse side of purity and righteousness, and of something deeper than



either. If then the sense of sin is morbid, all aspiration after purity is morbid also. All the high-souled, heroic men and women who have ever lived must in this case be simply pathological subjects, and the biographies of our Gordons and Godolphins are so many *post mortems* revealing the precise amount of poison in the system! Do we really believe this simple inference from the Modernist diagnosis? Do we believe that the true 'helpers and friends of mankind' have been those who, flinging holiness to the winds, have revelled in licentious 'health'? Perhaps we are never quite fully aware of the hold which Religion still obtains over the consciousness, despite the veneer with which Modernism has bespread our sentiment, till we realise the difficulties which would beset the path of anyone who should maintain in his ordinary practice and behaviour that the penitence and aspiration of the spiritual life are morbid growths of the imagination.

If a man desires intensely any form of good, surely his disappointment, on failing to attain it, must be proportionally bitter! And when that desire springs from a personal longing to love and serve some living object, surely the knowledge that he has betrayed his loyalty must cover him with confusion and shame! The words 'I acknowledge my transgression and my sin is ever before me' are only 'morbid' if we account also

' morbid ' ' Behold Thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom.' Let us be reasonable, and say whether we are prepared to sacrifice the latter, before we quite reject the former. Are we prepared to brand as morbid St. Paul, St. Catherine, St. Francis, Sir Thomas More, Bunyan, and Wesley, and find their places taken by the full-blown bucolic naturalism illustrated in the characters of a certain West-country novelist ? It is to the latter that the ' gospel ' of Modernism leads, whether intentionally or not. And we cannot have it both ways. Penitence and pessimism divide the world.

§ 12. *The Fact of Sin belongs to the Spiritual Order*

This brings us back to our starting-point, that the whole phenomena of sin are of a spiritual order. This includes not only the present sense of sin within us, but the difficulty man has had of finding an adequate expression of his consciousness of God, the wild errors of his instinct, and the strange forms under which he has sought to worship ; the terrible penalties he has inflicted on himself in seeking to fulfil his desire for union with God ; and the life-long misery under which the race has groaned. When we survey all the aspects of man's spiritual history, the only construction which they will bear is that of a personal estrangement from

that Nature which is at once the Life and the Law of our spiritual being. And when in the fulness of time the Divine Response became incarnate, and God, Who aforetime had spoken in prophet and poet, ruler and saint, at length could speak in the Person of His Son, it was the estranged state of man's desire, complicated by the good he strove after as well as by the evil which had entered into him, which caused his first and terrible response to all he had sought and longed for to be—Calvary.

## VII

### Reconciliation

At Calvary all the sacrifices of the world, blood-stained, cannibal, defiled with polluted rites—the revolting yet ubiquitous sacrifices wherewith mankind on the one hand craved for the fruition of the earth in food-stuffs, and on the other sought to propitiate some sinister and sanguinary god—at last fell to dust, the cerements and wrappings of a mystery none had even dimly approached, and left the One true Sacrifice, and ‘the Blood of His Cross,’ visible there, not to be expunged nor explained away for ever.—MAURICE CLARE, *The Creed in Human Life*.

That is the worst of the wages of sin. Sinners cannot pay them all—however willingly, however passionately desirous even, they may be to do so.—LUCAS MALET.

As the principle of death passed on in succession through the whole of human kind, in like manner the principle of the resurrection life extends from One Person to the whole of humanity.—ST. GREGORY NYSSEN, *Great Catechism*, xvi.

The Incarnation, the Crucifixion . . . are energising facts from which no lapse of centuries can sever us.—H. P. LIDDON, *The Divinity of Christ*.

- § 1. The instinct to propitiate ‘explained’ in Christ. § 2. The sacrifice of Christ, its alleged ‘incredibility.’ § 3. Causes of misunderstanding. § 4. The essentials of the doctrine. § 5. The modern belief respecting the death of Christ involves us in a hopeless view of the race. § 6. The exiles. § 7. Sacrifice and justice. § 8. The cost of reconciliation: (1) The life of the cross. § 9. (2) The death of the cross. § 10. The personal application of the sacrifice. § 11. Reconciliation, the commencement of the life that is in Christ. § 12. Salvation is by faith, as life is by faith. § 13. Salvation, a sacramental life. § 14. Sacrifice, not substitution, the completion of response.

§ 1. *The Instinct to propitiate 'explained' in Christ*

The instinct to propitiate is, we have already seen, well-nigh as universal as the consciousness of God. Indeed it is the form which desire for union with God has ever taken, and it lies at the basis of the whole of the active side of religion. All students of anthropology have been struck with the widespread prevalence of this idea, so much so that one of the most learned of them, Dr. Frazer, has made it the basis of his definition of religion, and while we are bound to reject that definition on the score of incompleteness,<sup>1</sup> we cannot but accept the testimony of such an authority to the importance of propitiation as a religious phenomenon.

The more we reflect upon it, the more inexplicable does this instinct appear to be except as the reflex of some constitutional necessity, rendered, like the Divine Response, weird and fantastic by the estranged human medium through which it gains expression. A desire which can overcome the instinct of self-preservation, and force the savage to return with oblations to the foot of the crag whence fell the destroying rock,<sup>2</sup> must arrest our attention and exercise our keenest interest. And the whole phenomena of sacrifice are not less remarkable, once we fix our mind upon them.

<sup>1</sup> See above, II. § 4.

<sup>2</sup> See above, II. § 3.

The only 'explanation' forthcoming is that given in Christ, in Whom was 'God, reconciling the world to Himself,' by the 'full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice of Himself once offered.' We shall bear in mind that 'explanation' in the scientific sense is reached when a phenomenon otherwise isolated and yielding no information about itself is co-ordinated with other phenomena of the same order, so that the one interprets the other. In the sacrifice of Christ, as a part of the Divine Response, we have the human instinct to propitiate linked up with sacrifice as a necessity of reconciliation, i.e. as the removal of that which stood in the way of reconciliation. Thus, next to the fact of the Incarnation, or the fulfilment of man's consciousness of God, comes the fact of reconciliation by sacrifice, or the fulfilment of man's desire for union with God. And so the two phenomena in which we have seen religion everywhere to consist are completely explained and fulfilled in Christ.

§ 2. *The Sacrifice of Christ, its Alleged  
'Incredibility'*

It is just here, however, that many of us find the supreme difficulty of the Christian revelation—in the thought of sacrifice for sin being required, and being offered by the Son of God. The tendency of the time is to view the Death of Christ as no more

than the inevitable result of a life lived in opposition to the false standards of His day. And while men, for the most part, gratefully acknowledge that protest and the fruits of it, they disconnect it with all idea of sacrifice in the propitiatory sense. The Cross is still 'to the Jews a scandal, and to Greeks foolishness'—a scandal, that is, to the moral sense, and incredible to the intellect.

Reconciliation, then, in the full Christian meaning of the word, is popularly arraigned on two counts, as incredible and unjust. Let us try to examine the grounds of this difficulty. In the first place, the credibility of anything, whether a statement or an event, depends very largely on the way in which it is understood. If, for example, we are ignorant of aerostatics, we might very well, on being told that M. Legagneux had risen eighteen thousand feet into the air, pronounce the performance 'incredible.' When, however, we have inquired into the possibilities of flight, and perhaps tested the thing to some extent by actual experiment, the state of mind which at first pronounced it 'incredible' is modified, and we realise that what we mistook for incredibility was a certain incredulity in ourselves. Now, very much of the alleged 'incredibility' of Christian doctrine arises either from our want of accurate information of what the doctrine really teaches,

or from some loose or partial representation of it. Again and again the writer has proved this to be the case in intercourse with those who doubt or reject some portion of the Christian Faith. When it has been put clearly before them what such and such a doctrine is intended by the Church to express, their antecedent difficulties, at any rate, are removed, and they usually wonder how they could ever entertain such a travesty of the Faith as they did. The pity of it is that so many should never have had any clear instruction in the faith at all. There is no doubt some ground here for criticising the Church's method of instruction, but at the same time it could be wished that the average man would show a more responsible attitude in regard to the Faith. As a rule the average man never seriously considers Christian doctrine at all till he comes to doubt what he thinks it is.

### § 3. *Causes of Misunderstanding*

This is particularly the case in regard to reconciliation. Few doctrines have suffered more from partial and erroneous ideas associated with it. As if the doctrine was not sufficiently difficult of itself, both early metaphor and modern crudities seem to have combined for its perversion. During the first four centuries the conception was largely coloured by the idea of ransom, or the redemption of slaves. This idea had its source in a word used



by Christ Himself,<sup>1</sup> but a metaphor is not a doctrine, and probably the concentration of the whole of Christian thought on this metaphor did much towards the travesty of the truth. It gave rise to the prevalent opinion, shared by St. Augustine and Origen, that the death of Christ was a ransom paid to the spirit of evil for the souls held in his power. Later on this was controverted by St. Athanasius, who contended that the 'price' had been paid to satisfy Divine justice. Still, however, the metaphor ruled speculation, and continued to do so up to the beginning of the twelfth century, when Anselm, the Piedmontese Archbishop of Canterbury, propounded the explanation which with some modifications has since been held as orthodox, viz. that the voluntary humiliation and death of the Son of God filled up, as it were, the hiatus in the Divine Will caused by man's defection and choice of self-will. To this we shall return in a moment.

As set forth in more recent times it is often complained that the doctrine is presented with a crudeness that may well excuse intellectual revolt. Criticism of the kind of which Matthew Arnold's is perhaps the classical example has been forthcoming from time to time. It ought, however, in fairness to be borne in mind that the main object of the preacher guilty of these crudities, is not to render

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xx. 28; St. Mark x. 45.

the doctrine congruous with philosophy, but to elicit a spiritual response in those to whom it is presented. The apostle in any age is opportunist to this extent, that it matters comparatively little how the truth is presented, so long as its spiritual import is forced home. He differs in function both from the catechist and the scientific lecturer in that he is not dealing so much with the explication of truth, as with rendering it so simple and vivid that it may lay hold of the hopes and affections of those who are on the brink of spiritual life or death. The man who sees in the depths of his own experience the terrible nature and implications of sin is not prone to be fastidious as to the precise way in which the 'Good News' is presented to him. It was a crude thought of the prodigal that the hired servants of his father had bread enough and to spare, and it was very far from being the whole truth about the home he had left and for which he secretly yearned, but it was the beginning of better things. God constantly uses unworthy motive to arouse or stimulate right desires, simply because it is the only material at hand for the purpose. And it is the same with the presentation of truth. When a man knows himself to be lost in sin, even the crudest 'commercial' theory of reconciliation may stimulate his faith in the Saviour. Is it not the fact that many of us who are inclined to reflect upon the

doctrine have not the slightest idea of the diseased state which we present in the sight of God, or of the despair into which we must one day be thrown by the discovery of it? The background of Redemption is not a literary and philosophical acumen but the fact of sin. Those who proclaim reconciliation are not for the most part thinking how it may strike the ear of fastidious criticism. They are wrestling with the question, How can the spiritual balance be restored? How can the alienated desire be re-centred on God? Those questions have outlasted Athens and Alexandria. They will be asked—and answered—long after the intellectual frivolity and insincerity of the present age has passed into a proverb.

#### § 4. *The Essentials of the Doctrine*

The two essentials of the doctrine of Reconciliation are the acknowledgment of its necessity, and the belief in its virtual accomplishment by Christ. It seems a pity that we should not be satisfied to take these in their simplicity, and on them as the basis of our faith enter into union with Christ. Men are all for the simplifying of religion, but the difficulty is that they want to deny its profundity. From the very beginning this has been the root of the trouble. There would be no intricacies of Athanasian dogma to perplex simple folk if the modernists of the fourth century had not been

willing to sacrifice the whole truth to the little bit they could understand. And to-day the Modernist is not content to accept the simple statement of the Faith, he wants to turn it into a denial that there is anything in the Faith but what is perfectly 'rational' and obvious. So long as this is the case the Church must from sheer loyalty to Christ continue to reaffirm the Divine significance of dogma. Her conflict with Modernism is the revolt of a spiritual faith from the tyranny of 'the intellectual all-in-all.'

§ 5. *The Modern Belief respecting the Death of Christ involves us in a hopeless View of the Race*

If Christ's death carries with it no more meaning than that of the supreme martyr, the knell of human hope sounded during those hours of Agony on the Cross. Mankind violently rejected the best chance it ever had. It means this: a perfectly good man came among us, spent himself in doing good, loving the meanest and most wretched, healing the diseased, and not least the diseased in mind, speaking words of health and life and highest wisdom, and 'all for love and nothing for reward,' and he was done to death with less excuse than an idle boy pulls out the limbs of a fly. What kind of reflection does this cast on the race? Can any one believing this and no more than this ever wish to hear the name of Christ again? The greater our reverence for His

character, the more deeply does the crime brand us with shame. 'His blood be upon us and our children' haunts and enfolds the earth. Its cry has never ceased and never will until the last of the line of murderers has staggered unredeemable to his doom.

The case was entirely different with Socrates,—though that was bad enough. But the death of Socrates, though a crime, was a political crime, the 'expediency' plea for the death of Christ was a cloak for mere envy and hatred of goodness. It changes the whole aspect of so-called martyrdom. It transforms the martyr into a mere victim. He is of no more significance than the man who is robbed and cast into a ditch. If we believe that the death of Christ was simply the greatest crime on record, it is time we ceased from the sentiment of poets, and withdrew our hands from trying to cleanse and uplift the world; we are only prolonging an inexplicable torture to which race-suicide would put a merciful end.

That is, if sin is not sin; if Calvary is not the measure of man's estrangement from Light, Love, and Truth; if God, Who can use even a perverted will in bringing about its restoration, did not subdue the tragedy of Calvary into an episode in a Diviner drama; if, by giving human freedom rein, He did not cause it to solve the problem of its own release; if man cannot say with the Oriental poet:

‘Once, staggering, blind with folly, on the brink of hell,  
Above the everlasting fire-flood’s awful roar,  
God threw His Heart before my feet; and  
stumbling o’er  
That obstacle Divine, I into Heaven fell.’

As the lightning flash reveals not only the presence of the electric current, but the darkened earth, and omnipresent heaven, so the Death of Christ reveals not only the measure of man’s estrangement, but the extremity of Divine Love and Wisdom.

Unless the race is utterly hopeless, the mere martyrdom of Christ is far more ‘incredible’ than even the most travestied form of the Christian doctrine of His Sacrifice. Persons who reject the latter do not sufficiently fix their minds on the former in all its naked hopelessness. And, worse perhaps than that, they do not view the death of Christ in its context in human history, that is, in the history of man’s consciousness and desire. It is the purpose of these pages to do that, and with a view to avoiding theological technicalities, let us throw both the fact and the doctrine into the form of an allegory.

### § 6. *The Exiles*

Let us imagine the case of a number of men who have rebelled against the laws of the society of which they formed a part, and, in consequence, have been exiled.

In this exile there is nothing unjust. The law they have violated was no arbitrary one. It was essential to the existence of the society. By breaking it they broke with the society. It became impossible for them, and they for it.

In the course of their exile they came to forget the law they had violated. They formed a new society on an entirely different basis from the original one. As a society, it proved a failure from every point of view, because, as a matter of fact, the only workable constitution of society was the one they had outraged and left.

As time goes on the wiser among them begin to find this out. They try to recover a knowledge of the broken law. To some extent they succeed in this, but their difficulty is their inability to put into practice what little they do recall of the law. Their own organisation is greatly against their doing so, and in addition to this they become aware of a curious impotence from within continually thwarting their efforts.

In this miserable state a member of the original society takes pity on their ignorance and helplessness, and makes his appearance amongst them. Without forfeiting his status in the original society or in any way infringing its laws, he lives their life, By his personal character and conduct, as well as by his teaching and decisions, he revives, in such as are sensible of their position and loss, a vivid

memory of the environment they once enjoyed, and of the law they once obeyed.

But it is at terrible cost to himself that he is able to do this, for the general life of the exiles has become so debased that his sojourn amongst them is nothing less than a constant torture to him. Moreover the majority, having the interests of their own organisation at heart, regard him as a dangerous innovator, and leave no stone unturned to achieve his death.

Now it was part of his mission, not merely to visit and teach the exiles, but to become naturalised as one of themselves, while at the same time he retained his standing with the society he had left. Whatever he did, therefore, was done in a twofold capacity, as one of the exiles, and yet as one who never himself merited exile. He was thus able to yield a perfect obedience to the constitution of the original society, as the exiles themselves could not do, and yet as representing the exiles in every other respect. Naturally, if the constitution was again observed by the exiles all estrangement would automatically come to an end. The test of their friend's obedience to that constitution lay in his being willing to carry out its laws though at the cost of his own life. Nothing less than death could represent the perfection of obedience. In accomplishing his death, then, the exiles gave him the one opening by which he could in this



representative sense achieve their perfect obedience with the society they had outraged. He died.

After the crisis, very slowly, one by one, the exiles came to understand their friend and all his life had disclosed. They were not at once and *en masse* restored to their old allegiance, *for the sake of* what he had done, for that, of course, would have provided no guarantee of their own allegiance, and would moreover have been putting his sufferings in place of their own obedience. But they were no longer in hopeless estrangement. The constitution and its requirements had been vindicated. The way was open to return. The actual return of the exiles depended on their individual willingness, and on their grasping a certain power of return which had been placed at their disposal by their friend.

### § 7. *Sacrifice and Justice*

This allegory—if it is worthy of the name—is so slight as to need little by way of explanation. The question, however, which it is intended to elicit is: What is there in the narrative to shock our sense of justice? We look, in justice, not for what is impossible, but for righteous dealing within the limits assigned. Indeed, limitation is of the very essence of justice. Is not the case of the exiles dealt with at each stage according to its inherent possibilities?

Revelation lifts us up to contemplate a state in which man lived in perfect harmony with that Divine Society Whose spiritual likeness he bore. Then, in some way of which we have but broken glimpses—for it is not essential to the main fact—he rebelled against the law of this harmony, which is love. Was there anything unjust in his banishment? How could he be otherwise than banished? It was the immediate automatic effect of his own action, for if there is one thing plainer than another it is that we cannot remain in harmony with what we no longer love.

And how could man recover from this self-banishment? He tried—it is a matter of history. Throughout the ages he retained a consciousness of this Divine Society, and a desire for reunion with It. He was smitten with the knowledge that he had robbed God of His due. He tried to make reparation. His attempts were often so grotesque and revolting that they can only be ascribed to the delirium of spiritual disease. None of them could give him the key to his lost position. None of them could heal the breach or restore him to favour with the Society he had left, for the simple reason that the broken law was not an arbitrary one, but essential to the very existence of the Society, and man could not recall it. He had forgotten that it was love.

Meanwhile all sorts of evils attended him in his

exile. Nor was there anything unjust in this, because he had not been created for these conditions of his own framing. He had been created for the conditions he had broken. He had got into his wrong element, and almost everything he did reminded him that he was an anomaly. Anomaly is the best word by which to describe him, for was not his whole condition *anomia*,—lawlessness, sin. His very outer organisation was a chaos of alternating despotisms and rebellions. And the more fully his inner life and motive were displayed the more impressive became the misbegotten tumult of *anomia*. It was out of a heart which had forgotten to love that proceeded murders, thefts, adulteries, uncleanness, and all manner of evil.

But in all this he was not forgotten by the Society, whose essential law being love still loved him. All that was possible was done to attract him back, to remind him of the forgotten law. At length the Heavenly Friend, the Christ, appeared in his very midst. He brought the key-fact to man's remembrance. Love was the principle of the Eternal Society. It was by love alone that man could obey. Across our highest and best attempts Christ wrote the word 'Love.' He changed the whole nature of obedience from the negative to the positive. 'Thou shalt not sin' became 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.' He

changed the practical outcome of this from the relative to the absolute, so that the welfare of others became merged in supreme regard for the Father's Will. And, what was far more than principle or precept, Christ by His life amongst us revealed Love in its disinterested essence. For the Eternal Life of God is an action, and only by action could the Life of Love be manifest. 'Herein perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us.' Again, is there anything in this to revolt our sense of justice? Shall not pity and compassion move freely in the out-flowing of sympathy? Would those who have objected to the doctrine of reconciliation on the score of injustice have had God leave man to his self-made fate for ever? That would have been 'just' in the grim sense of human retaliation, but mercy is juster than the justice of man.

§ 8. *The Cost of Reconciliation : (I) The Life of the Cross*

The sacrifice of Christ must not be understood as applying only to His death. His Divine purpose involved Him in sacrifice from the very first. Outwardly, His life was one of poverty and isolation, and only the spiritual radiance which shines through it reminds us that the Man of Sorrows is also the triumphant Christ. We recognise the beginnings of the reconciling sacrifice in His earthly life. Those

who have ever had to live in a society which jars upon them even in its least obtrusive crassities, may learn something at least of what the Redeemer suffered during the agony of those alienated years. Yet it was all undergone, joyfully, lovingly, in restoring to the exiles what was lost and hidden in their sinful oblivion. When Renan says 'Thanks be to Jesus, the dullest existence, the most absorbed by sad and humiliating duties, has had its glimpse of Heaven!' he is only touching the fringe of the actual significance of Christ to exiled men and women.

The arduous days and solitary nights, the infinite pains and patience, the endless disappointment He experienced, are indications, and barely more, of the price Christ paid for the souls of men. If His only object had been to reveal the forgotten Love, did He not in that sense 'give Himself *for*' us? Are we not to that extent 'bought with a price'? Is there any other name for what He did but 'redemption'? Sacrifice, Reconciliation, Redemption are not merely justified terms, they are the *only* terms that can be applied to the nature and result of His life and work. Nay, in them the Death was already expressed. The whole of that life was a death, to the extent of the voluntary laying down of the will.

And what was there unjust in this? The reader must pardon the frequent recurrence of

the question, because it is right we should press home this accusation, and discover where, if anywhere, it is truly founded. If a man cannot meet his creditors, or pay a fine in court, is it unjust for a friend to come forward to his aid? What is it that disarms the action of the injustice that would undoubtedly attend the *imposition* of a fine on an innocent person against his will? Is it not the voluntary character of the friend's undertaking? The bare possibility of injustice is dismissed in the case of One Who confessed that He 'gave His life a ransom for many.'

#### § 9. (2) *The Death of the Cross*

To go back a little; we saw in our allegory that the friend of the exiles came to them without forfeiting his status in the original society, and that he paid a part of their penalty which they themselves were unable to pay. As he was 'naturalised' amongst them he was able to pay this and restore the old conditions, at least to the extent of abolishing the barrier to their return.

If we accept Christ's own word, the life He spent so freely in example and revelation was quite other than the life of one of ourselves, and if so then we have at His very birth the foreshadowing of a price which no *man* could pay in a transaction no *man* could effect. The Reconciliation was therefore far

more than a reconciliation brought about by an intermediary. We have to distinguish between the personal estrangement of the sinner, the consequence of man's own guilt, and the estrangement of the Sinless caused by voluntary self-identity and sympathy with the sinner. It is in the latter sense that Christ was 'made under the Law,' and that His life-long sacrifice of Himself was possible. He did not inherit sin. He did not inherit disease. But because He was man He was involved in the general catastrophe of suffering. In the untold agonies of crucifixion He experienced the extreme of human woe. In the deprivation of the Father's Presence He tasted the bitterness of disunion. So far, however, His Death was representative merely. It could not in this sense effect a just reconciliation, any more than could the death of an ordinary martyr or pioneer in the cause of truth. The heart of reconciliation is far deeper than that. While a naturalised exile, the friend was still a member of the original society, and it was as such that he did for the exiles what they could not do for themselves. The broken law was something more than law. It was part of the very existence of the society, and by the rebellion a deep wound had been inflicted upon it which could only be closed by the perfect conformity of one who while an exile had never sullied that conformity with rebellion. In other words, so intimate is Love, so absolutely one is

that society of which man once formed a part, that his rebellion threatened an internal hiatus in the Divine existence. Man himself could never close that wound. Man has no command over the past. But to God there is no past. Everything is in eternal present. And only One who was Divine could by perfect conformity fill up what was lacking in submission to the eternal will through man's rebellion.

Only God could fill the interval. Only man could offer the sacrifice. In the death of the Divine Christ we see an eternal sacrifice offered by a perfect human will. It is this alone that completes the reconciliation on the side of man and on the side of God. The Redemption of Christ, so greatly foreshadowed in His life, was only rendered complete in His death.

Once more, what is there in this that revolts our sense of justice? If the effects of sin had ceased when Christ died on Calvary, or if by that act all men had been restored irrespective of their own choice and amendment, there certainly would have been some ground for the stigma of injustice. As it is, the moral implications of the cross are no less rigorous than was the sacrifice itself. Let the reader again examine the conditions on which 'peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ' was proclaimed, in the 'Acts' and the Epistles, and he will realise, as perhaps he has not yet done,



how strenuously the new life of penitence and imitation of Christ is made the condition of all the benefits of the Passion. The barrier was removed. The way was open for return. And this, which man never could have done, was done for him freely and out of boundless love. But it was no less left to him to make the return, individually and of his free choice, that he who had by the abuse of his freedom departed from the centre of his life and love, should by the use of his freedom return again thither.

§ 10. *The Personal Application of the Sacrifice*

We may now be in a position to understand what is most characteristic in the whole ministry of Christ, viz. His appeal to men to centre themselves in Him. It is only in voluntary union with Christ that the benefits of the Passion are secured to the individual. It is this of which the instinct of approach from the first had been prophetic. Man longed for God, and God appeared, in order to satisfy his longing. But it is one thing to long for an object and another to transfer the heart's desire wholly to it. It is only when that transference is made, and the believer is 'in Christ' that the spiritual consequences of sin are fully removed, and re-union is effected. Thus the Christian believer holds the facts about Christ in a twofold sense. He holds them in a historic sense, and he holds them in a

mystic sense. He holds them as having once happened, and he holds them as happening still. The Incarnation, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection are not merely past events of history, they are 'energising facts from which no lapse of centuries can sever us.' The Christian is 'crucified with Christ.' He 'dies with Christ.' He is 'buried with Christ.' He is 'quickened together with Christ.' He is 'risen with Christ.' He 'dwells' or 'lives' 'with Christ.'<sup>1</sup> And this language is far beyond poetic symbolism. It is the language of fact. It is intended to convey nothing less than a 'profound incorporation' with Christ.

§ II. *Reconciliation, the Commencement of the Life that is in Christ.*

A religion that remains in the outer court of historical fact is not a religion at all. It is merely history. Far be it from us to minimise the importance of the facts of Christ's life and revelation. Conditioned as we are, our faith and hope must needs be rooted in fact. Time and locality are the measure and pledge of what is before us. Yet, on the other hand, neither the historical fact nor even the eternal verities that lie behind it constitute religion. Many a man has said, 'I don't see how

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vi. 6; Gal. ii. 20; 2 Tim. ii. 1; Rom. vi. 8; vi. 4; Eph. ii. 5; Col. ii. 13; Eph. ii. 6; Col. ii. 12; Rom. vi. 8; 2 Tim. ii. 11; 1 Thess. v. 10.

it helps me to believe that Christ suffered, died, rose, and ascended.' Nor does it, if by belief he means the assent of the mind to what rests on satisfactory evidence. Such response leaves him unresponsive. Religion, therefore, while with its basis of fact it appeals to the intellect, does not appeal to that alone, but to the far more fundamental quality which we call faith. It is by faith that we 'subjectivise' the historical, by faith that the 'incorporation' with Christ is realised in each of us.

§ 12. *Salvation is by Faith, as Life is by Faith*

Faith, then, is not a substitute for reason, not a department of the imagination, nor is it fair to use it as though it were the antithesis of fact. It is very difficult to define, because it touches and includes in some sort every part of our nature. Yet none of us can be ignorant of what faith is, since we have been employing it ever since we were born. It is life that teaches us that 'we walk by faith.' We cannot move a muscle, advance a step, think a thought, except by faith. On the one part, there is our will, on the other, the world external to us. We wish, e.g. to lift a book. How do we set about it? By a certain contraction of the muscles. But how do the muscles contract? By the exercise of what we call our will. But, again, how do we exercise our will? What precedes the exercise of it? We cannot give it any other

name than faith. Before ever the will is exercised we believe we can take up the book. We do not even stop to think about it. We are not even conscious of it. It is not an intellectual process at all. We call it indeed a 'mechanical' process, but the term 'mechanical' can only relate to the nervous and muscular action which follows the initial movement. In its genesis this movement is a 'venture of faith.' And the whole of life is a series of such 'ventures.' Just in proportion as life consists in the constant adjustment of relations between ourselves and the external world, so is life one continuous exercise of faith.

And as in ordinary life, desire and action meet in faith, so in the spiritual life, human desire and Divine power meet in faith. As in ordinary life, however, there are laws of health and of the science of life, so in the sphere of Redemption there are laws and methods which require to be observed. On the Divine part there is the continuance of the Incarnation in ourselves as 'members of Christ'; and on the human side there is the constant faith that such a process is going on, and the constant centring of the whole desire upon Christ. On the Divine part, there is the Sacramental system, the gift of Divine Power through recognised channels; and on the human side, the devout life centring in and regulated by the sacramental fact of the imparted Christ.

§ 13. *Salvation, a Sacramental Life*

Christ taught that our desire was so far estranged that it was needful for every man to be born anew. And in the initiatory act of the Christian life Christ's representative Death and Resurrection actually take place in the individual, who is raised from the laver of regeneration radiant with a new and spiritual life. Thus at the outset of the Christian course the historical fact becomes the mystical or personal fact. We must not, however, overestimate the control which this fact exerts over the subsequent career of the individual. He is still man, still free, still dependent on the continual exercise of faith. He may indeed fail to persevere. What has been done is that he has been again placed in the spiritual condition which the race originally held. The power to arise has been given him. He is to 'reckon himself dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

And the new life thus begun is sustained, on the Divine part, by constant gifts of power. Every prayer, every devout thought, every 'act' of faith, hope, or love finds an immediate response in the new environment of Divine Grace. The race-drama of instinct and response is re-enacted over and over again in his heart—with this difference, that instinct is no longer balked and thwarted. Its consciousness, ever transcended, is never

unilluminated. Its desire, never satiated, is ever satisfied. But so really at one is the experience of the soul with that of the race that the old-world language in which other souls in time immemorial have expressed their love of God is ever fresh and full and new. For in Christ the race is one, and the new and the old, the first and the last are the same. In Him the soul is ever feeling afresh after God, desiring fresh revelations of His Love, aspiring to closer likeness. And God is ever responding to this feeling, and pouring Himself into the heart, the life, the motives, the character. Again man is responding to God's claims. The whole of the outer life, all its circumstances, gains, losses, hopes, fears, trials, sacrifices, becomes the 'law' which transcends any mere code or ethical system. Life consists in nothing less than a daily endeavour to yield God His due. And this again accounts for the fact that religion is only irksome to those who do not give themselves up to it entirely.

§ 14. *Sacrifice, not Substitution, the Completion of Response*

It is no part of our purpose to make a general survey of the Christian course. It is only touched upon in order to indicate the far-reaching implications of Reconciliation and to dissociate the doctrine from the slur of substitution pure and simple. However Christian theorists may have

erred in the past, and however crude and literal may have been the language of preacher and poet, no one taking into account the whole sense in which the doctrine was applied by the Apostles and their successors can believe for a moment that the ethic of Reconciliation was the *substitution* of 'the innocent for the guilty,' or any kind of 'transaction' effecting the deliverance of man irrespective of his own choice and effort. Christ could not be a 'substitute' for man for the simple reason that He *is* Man. He is the whole race, the new race, ἡ καινὴ κτίσις, in proportion as by its own free choice it is 'found in Him.' This is what the great mystic meant when he exclaimed: 'To be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, but the righteousness which is by faith,'<sup>1</sup> that is, a life of harmony with God's will, made possible by faith in the Reconciliation, and consequent incorporation with Christ. And again, 'The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me, and *gave Himself for me*,'<sup>2</sup>—not, 'for' in the sense of 'instead of,' but in the sense of 'on behalf of.' The conception could not better be summed up in modern language than in the words of the hymnologist:

'Look, Father, look on His anointed Face,  
And only look on us as found in Him.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Phil. i. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. ii. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. J. M. Neale.

Flowing from this, be it always remembered, is the daily sacrifice of the believer, 'himself, his soul and body.' To this extent, indeed, the sacrifice of Christ is representative, that it is not complete without the co-operation of the believer. Its unique value lies in its affording man the power to sacrifice himself, to fulfil that instinct of approach in which we have seen the entire active side of religion to be based. It was not the external oblation that God required, for that could but be symbolic; it was not the external oblation that man *felt satisfied* to offer; God demanded the whole self; man desired to give the whole self. In Christ the whole self is yielded; in Christ the Divine demand and the human desire are completely fulfilled. And yet as self includes the externalised self as well as the interior motive and love, the sacrifice of soul and body, the 'living sacrifice' as St. Paul calls it,<sup>1</sup> involves the oblation of all which, though external, is yet personal. That is why, in the Great Sacrament, the materials which are to become, by the operation of the Divine Spirit, the Body and Blood of Christ, the Sustenance of the Faithful, are brought and offered as typical of the fruits of the earth, of the creature-life, together with alms, the symbol of all life yields us. The whole is thus emblematic of the mysterious significance of the life that now is. The Divine Purpose to redeem and restore us 'was made Flesh,' healed

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xii. 1.



bodily disease, endured bodily suffering, rose from the dead in bodily form, and feeds His people with miraculous Flesh and Blood. Might He not have wrought our deliverance independently of the material, and kept and restored us by the unclothed Will? Undoubtedly. Yet there is something in every divisible particle of matter, 'every hair of the head,' of infinite significance in the sight of God. What is it? What is the mystery of this realm of sight and touch? We do not know. We know sufficient to see 'every common bush aflame with God,' and feel around us continually the mantle of His presence.

The Divine Response, then, attains completion in the sacrifice of Christ and of a race restored in Him. Not in His enlightening the consciousness of mankind, not in Him as a living expression of the Truth, not in His work as 'the supreme Teacher,' not as the stooping form of infinite compassion and love—in none of these aspects of Response is the desire of nations fulfilled, but in the Divine Priest of the One human Sacrifice, perfect and complete, freely and for ever offered for us all. Here and here only could He cry 'It is finished.' Here alone is the prophecy of millions of altars fulfilled, and one of the most deeply-laid instincts of the race explained. And the thirst for union with God in Jew or Greek, dreaming Indian, or the wild children of forest and island, is accomplished in One Who Himself is the oblation and the spiritual Heaven opened thereby.

## VIII

### The Paradox of Christian History

The Christian Ideal has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult, and left untried.—G. K. CHESTERTON, *What's Wrong with the World?*

Everything with a downward tendency hurries, everything with a deathward tendency. Corruption and decay may supervene on life almost immediately; but the development of embryonic life is very slow, and the higher the organism the slower the development.—MAURICE CLARE, *The Creed in Human Life*.

- § 1. Theory challenged by fact. § 2. The older apologetic. § 3. Present-day turpitude. § 4. The paradox of fact. § 5. What is involved in the method Christ chose to employ. § 6. Rival methods in the task of human improvement. § 7. Education. § 8. Naturalism. § 9. Christianity alone in the field. § 10. Objection that righteousness implies consistency of conduct. § 11. Future stages of existence assumed in the Christian process of restoration. § 12. The actual course of history foreseen and foretold by Christ. § 13. The 'lower goodness.' § 14. The difficulty presented by Christian character largely a psychological one. § 15. Criticism the offspring of Christianity. § 16. Summary and conclusion.

#### § 1. *Theory challenged by Fact*

WE have reached the position that Religion, in its active and completed sense, is the personal response of man to Christ. The individual, striving to realise the gift of life within him, is responding

to Christ. The Church, in so far as its members are so striving, is the collective response to Christ.

Here, however, we are faced by the question: Is this conception borne out by the facts? Taking Christ as what He is, and the manner of His appearing as what we have seen it to be, has the Christian Religion, viewed as a response to Him, proved the convincing thing it ought to be? The sceptic challenges us to deny that Christian history is in a great measure a record of bloodshed and persecution, of unholy intrigue and sordid aims, of shameless vice and revolting cruelty. He challenges us to deny that our own Christian life to-day, so far from reflecting 'the pattern life,' rather reflects the easy standards and deplorable lapses from human virtue which marked society at His appearance. If we are unable to deny these charges, can we wonder if the average impartial man prefers the evidence of the life to that of the theory?

### § 2. *The Older Apologetic*

The older method of meeting this challenge is no longer of force to-day. It used to be represented that the true Church is invisible, and that religion is only to be found in lives of holiness and deeds of beneficence. But over against this nothing is plainer than that the Church is a visible society; 'a city set upon a hill,' her Lord said, '*cannot be*

*hid.*' Her institutions, her methods, her worship, her demands are visible ; her life must be visible also. She cannot plead dual personality. She cannot wash her hands of her failures, any more than Dr. Jekyll could be divorced from Mr. Hyde. The sceptic's challenge is no more than an application of the test of Christ : ' By their fruits ye shall know them.' Criticism cannot be met by saying, ' The Lord knoweth them that are His.'

Nor will it avail us to set over against the visible crimes and errors of the Church the equally undeniable benefits that have followed in the wake of religion. The sceptic, however remote he may consider himself from the standpoint and interests of Christianity, is always ready to admit the amount and value of the actual contribution which Christianity has made to human welfare. He will grant that the Christian ages witness to an ' enthusiasm for goodness,' and a personal heroism in the cause of righteousness which it is hard to parallel. He will admit the beneficence of Christian institutions at their best, its hospitals, religious houses, orphanages, schools, and homes of learning ; its influence on arts, crafts, music, literature, and the humanities generally. All this he will grant, and probably more,—the application to-day of the same standards of saintliness employed by Christ, and an undeniably high average, at least in some quarters, of piety and benevolence. And yet—the other side

remains. 'I do not deny,' the average man tells us, 'that there are some singularly fine traits *connected* with religion, but so there are some woeful and revolting ones. If you say that the latter are not to be put down to religion, I agree with you, but I say neither are the former. I hold that religion is just human nature in one of its manifold phases, and that in its good as in its evil we see human nature and nothing more.'

The old 'credit and debit' method of the apologist of fifty years ago breaks down before this relativity of judgment. It answered very well to meet the question, 'Is Christianity a failure?' but that question is no longer raised—not because Christianity is deemed victorious, but because nothing is believed to be a 'failure.' The word is reminiscent of hard-and-fast estimates that have ceased to govern discussion. To-day history impresses us more and more with its complexity, while the difficulty of coming to a judgment where all standards are thrown into the melting-pot holds back the best men from taking side.

The real attack, then, on the score of inconsistency of Christian history and character, is that it reduces Christianity to the 'naturalistic' hypothesis that humanity has never been transcended, that there has never been any 'invasion from beyond.'

§ 3. *Present-day Turpitude*

And then, besides the positive anomalies of religion, the Church is arraigned on the negative side. How is it, men say, that a society claiming to be Divine should, after two thousand years of effort, still represent only a minority of the total population of the globe? Where is the 'progress' they say, that Christian people talk about? Is there any nation or community or party that bears any collective resemblance to Christ's spirit? And what, too, is the average attitude of the men and women who believe, or profess they believe, that such tremendous issues hang on the spread of their 'gospel'? Is Christianity a congregation of missionaries? Does even the average priest spend his time plucking brands from the burning? And here again it is idle to rebut visible evidence by theory and sentiment. The sceptic will grant that there are varieties of vocation, and that enthusiasm has its limits; and yet we cannot gainsay the charge of slackness in our ranks, or of a fine enthusiasm for the things of sense which is oddly at variance with the possession of 'eternal life' on the one hand, and the needs of our fellow men on the other. Besides, it is a light thing to be judged of man's judgment when our own standards are our judges, the Creed we recite, the *misereres* we chant, the Crucifix we carry aloft. In our towns,

villages, councils, boards, schools, offices, and shops the history of the Church on its darker side is being repeated to-day. It is happily free from some of the grosser abuses of the past ; but we cannot congratulate ourselves upon that ; respectability is not religion. It is tempered by good-will and kindly feeling ; we cannot congratulate ourselves upon that : religion is not a sentiment. It may be hedged by a solid wall of moral customs ; but we cannot shelter behind that : religion is not bridled barbarism. We have to admit all that the sceptic says, and, if we know our inward life at all, a good deal more. There is no getting away from the slow growth of Christianity, and of its miserable minority when the causes of the stumbling march and feeble line are illustrated in our own lives. It looks very much as though the true culmination of the tragedy of redemption were not Calvary, but some other eminence, where the city set upon an hill flew false colours and betrayed her Lord !

#### § 4. *The Paradox of Fact*

Yes,—and at the same time, No. All the ages through Christianity has been a failure, and all the ages through it is the only thing that has succeeded. Is not this trying to have it both ways ? Frankly it is. We must have it both ways, because Christianity is a paradox.

The paradox is that the very anomalies and

inconsistencies of the Church, past and present, actually testify to the sublime aim and method of Christ.

Let us be clear as to what the aim of Christ really was. It was not, as is so often mis-stated in popular religious literature, 'to make men good,' that is to say, it was not primarily so. He did indeed look for righteousness as the outcome of His appeal, but righteousness achieved as a by-product. The prime object of His appeal was man's reunion with God. He came to abolish the estrangement.

To some readers this statement of the aim of Christ may seem startlingly and even dangerously unethical. But the fact is that we are all of us misled, and the more part to a much greater extent than we know, by the idea that religion is a process in the manufacture of conduct. We have come to regard it almost solely in its utility value. Unconsciously, we put goodness before God. So strongly has the last century impregnated us with the idea that religion is morality. Now this idea has got to be replaced by Christ's idea. We have to see that, according to His estimate, at any rate, while righteousness stands very close to the Kingdom of God, it stands second, and even then it is to be a righteousness that shall exceed static uniformities. Our statement of the aim of Christ may not be a complete statement of the restoration of man, but it conveys the general impression we



derive from His sayings that He came that we might have *life*—life consisting of ‘the knowledge of,’ or union with, ‘God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.’

This being His object, what was His method? There are two ways of achieving an object: by suasion and by coercion. Needless to say, Christ did not contemplate reuniting man with God by means of coercion. It was the kingdom of God, not the kingdom of man that was to be ‘taken by force.’ Centring men’s affections and obedience in Himself, He appealed entirely to their free choice. His whole Ministry is, in this regard, but an amplification of the invitation: ‘Follow Me.’ It is remarkable that every parable He uttered turned on human freedom. Every ‘miracle’ also was conditional on the *will* of the individual to believe, i.e. to place himself at the Divine disposal with the same confidence with which, in the case of mechanical healing, we place ourselves in the hands of the physician. Discipleship, and all that turned upon it was similarly conditioned. It was always in the individual’s power to refuse, or, having accepted, to retract. As a matter of fact many did go back, and the record of their apostasy—so damaging to the cause, had the cause been otherwise grounded—is recorded in the Gospel with a matter-of-fact air which shows that no sort of coercion was contemplated in early

Christian propaganda. Indeed, as though jealous of His own Personality, where He desired man's spontaneous love, we find Christ balancing His sublime attractiveness by a restraint and discipline almost amounting to repulsion. The humanitarian school of to-day whose writers dwell so freely on the 'amiability' and winningness of the 'Teacher' they vouchsafe us, forget the austerity of Him 'Whose fan is in His hand,' and Who, if He claimed to be Saviour, claimed also to be Judge. They overlook the exacting tests which He employed on those who came to Him, and the rigour with which He sought to exclude every motive of discipleship except that of free response.

Now we find the same aim and method consistently continued by His Apostles when we follow up the 'origins' in the 'Acts,' and the Letters of St. Paul, and his co-Apostles. It is always the free human response that is appealed to, the sense of personal devotion, the allegiance that may at any time be broken. And as we pass along through the history of the Church, we find the same character, with one very notable exception.<sup>1</sup> The genius of Christ's religion, in the strictest sense of the expression, lies in its appeal to the free human choice, both before and after discipleship has begun.

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to the coercive claims of the Bishop of Rome, which, however, are a comparatively late importation from the alien realm of political government.

§ 5. *What is involved in the Method Christ chose to employ*

Let us be sure we understand what the appeal to the free human response really means. It means that at any stage in the Christian course a man is free to break with Christ, and to prefer the indulgence of desires contrary to His will. It means that the estrangement which happened in the beginning may happen again and again. His whole union with Christ is, from the human point of view, a sustained act of will. To be sure, the affections never move along any single line, and at any given point in our course we are a medley of conflicting desires and contending affections. It may be objected that this is putting a great deal on the merely human element, to the depreciation of that 'supernatural' power of Christ to which the past chapters have pledged us. The two things, however, are not in the least contradictory, nor does the human contingency derogate from the Divine might. The point is that the Divine might is almighty so long as the human response is forthcoming. 'If any man *will* love Me he will keep my commandments, and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him.' <sup>1</sup>

But what does this imply? This: that if the

<sup>1</sup> St. John xiv. 23.

'success' of Christianity turns on the free choice—or rather on a succession of free choices—of its adherents, is it not to be expected that inconsistency will make its appearance? Let it be remembered that freedom, to be truly freedom, carries with it the possibility of abuse, and that to form a society on the free allegiance to a Person, and that Person admittedly difficult to follow, means in all probability, though not inevitably, disloyalty and division. Not for one moment does this palliate the evils which we have confessed, but it does *account* for them. It removes the burden of failure from Him Who has been called 'the impotent Christ.'

It does more than this. The very imperfections of the response testifies to the fact that Christ went to the roots of our nature. For men and women can only become what they are willing to become, and their willingness turns entirely on their love. Love cannot be coerced. In resting His whole result on an appeal to the free choice, Christ was making a tremendous hazard. He was inviting terrible abuse, but 'He knew what was in man,' and saw no other method available. The partial failure testifies to the accuracy of the diagnosis.

#### § 6. *Rival Methods in the Task of Human Improvement*

Christians have a right to ask, when Christianity is arraigned for not having yet regenerated the

race, Has anything else? We admit the evils attendant on Christian history and the slow progress religion has made; are we not justified then in asking the critic to vindicate his expectations by pointing out methods equally historic but more successful? And if he cannot point to anything more speedy and efficient, does not his objection to Christianity amount to no more than an admission that human nature can apparently only be improved very slowly and with unequal results—which seems to be what religion is doing?

And, looking about us to-day, there seems to be nothing that seriously enters into competition with religion with a view to achieving the same result. In saying this we are not forgetting how much is being attempted on non-religious lines for the exterior life of mankind. Yet good as those attempts are in their way, he must be easily convinced who is satisfied that they are tending to the production of a finer quality of life. In many directions there is not wanting evidence that they chiefly tend to the externalising of life, to occupying the attention entirely with the *means* to live, at the expense of the *fact*. Nothing seems more clear on reviewing the history of the race than that the life of man has been from within outwards, and not *vice versâ*, and it is open to question whether our rather strenuous concentration on the accessories of life may not prove a very serious departure

from the *élan de la vie*, which has produced all that is unquestionably noble and impressive in the history of man. To cite only one instance,—notwithstanding the fact that the standard of comfort has been raised immeasurably of recent years, we are at the present moment confronted with the problem of voluntary service in the defence of our country ; while in all departments the quality of service—one of the few real tests of the life of a people—is such as to provoke grave misgiving.

No one would for a moment deprecate the material betterment of life, other things being equal. The fact that much of it to-day is conceived from a non-religious motive, and carried out in the spirit of quiet indifference to religion—falsely understood—is ‘accidental,’ and probably but the fashion of the hour. There is no opposition between religion and material improvement. But the *substitution* of the external for the vital, of the environment for the spiritual *verve* by which the organism alone is nourished bears its fruit already, and a very bitter fruit of discontent it is ! There ought to be the most complete harmony between religion and social science, but if the latter sues for a divorce at the hands of the people, there is every indication that alone it must fail, simply because by so doing it overlooks that ‘three-fourths of life’ which is not ‘conduct,’ but the conviction that ‘man cannot live by bread alone.’

§ 7. *Education.*

The reader may feel surprise at the omission of education from the non-religious programme. He may be one of those who look to education to achieve what, they tell us, religion has failed to do. Such persons are not so numerous as they were a few decades ago, and the reason is we are beginning to understand education a little better than we did. In the first place education is an instrument only, and its 'success' entirely depends on the purpose with which it is applied. In the next place the method of education is exactly the same as that of religion. It is an appeal to the free choice of the individual. A few years ago there seems to have been an idea afloat that education was coercion. We have at least learned that we cannot coerce even the multiplication table into the brain of the child who won't learn it. There may be a science of education ; there is not yet a surgery of it. As regards method and appeal, it is exactly on all fours with religion. Nay, if we took a rather larger view of religion, and a more spiritual view of education, we should find there was very little difference between the two. Granted the goal of training is the production of the highest efficiency of the spiritual powers of the growing man or woman, there could be no better illustration of the aim and method of Christ than education affords, and,

*pari passu*, of the failures and triumphs of His Church. In fact, if, instead of creating false expectations out of an imaginary conception of society, and its possibilities, the critic would look at Christ as the Educator of the race, slowly delivering men and women of their free consent from the bonds of sin and error, we should have at once a more 'rational' view of Christian history, and a clearer insight into the task of education which co-operation with Him offers to every one of us.

### § 8. *Naturalism*

The only thing which could validly claim to be a rival to religion would be a system of thought and activity which did not resemble religion at all. And it is a remarkable fact, worthy of the close attention of the student of the times, that those who dismiss religion from their calculations do not figure as devotees of a better method. The disciples of the school of Naturalism become merely exponents of human nature. They repudiate the dynamics of progress, as the phrase used to run, and what social science they possess is exclusively of the static kind. The reason of this is seen in the fact that they look less and less to the free human choice, and increasingly to a suspected 'necessity' which spells paralysis to anything like effort. Necessity, in the shape of adverse conditions, is their explanation of sin; necessity,



in the form of an environment that shall reduce the possibility of evil to a minimum, is their gospel of salvation. The place occupied under religion by repentance, faith, and holiness is occupied by sanitation, hygiene, and æsthetics.

A rivalry such as this, whether expounded by the novelist in his study or the voice of materialistic socialism in the market-place, certainly has every claim to the title of Anti-Christ. It denies the free human choice in which the religion of Christ is grounded. It places the sole hope of mankind in outward conditions—having first denied the ‘will’ which alone is capable of adjusting those conditions. It professes to find a ‘natural,’ that is to say a physical explanation of every element in the human consciousness. And it crowns its antagonism by limiting human existence to the present life. Such is the one rival which can be found to-day to the ‘old’ religion, to the original spiritual impulse of mankind.

As to its competition with religion, in respect to the advance of the race, that is a foregone conclusion. Naturalism is not a force at all; it is an attitude. It is nothing new. The pages of history teem with instances of its recurrence. It is the opiate by which certain classes of almost every past society have been lulled into static content, kindled here and there to an opalescent brilliance of art, otherwise dilettante, artificial,

irresponsible, sterile. Its great opponent is Nature herself, the salt of whose continuance dooms it to swift death. As a rival to religion in Western society to-day, it may be, and perhaps ought to be, regarded as a grave symptom ; as a competitor with religion for the goal of human hope, it is simply idle to regard it at all.

§ 9. *Christianity alone in the Field*

So far, then, it would seem that Christianity is alone in the field. In saying this, one would not be understood to deny the co-operation of much which is not externally pledged to the Christian position. As a matter of fact, on looking around for a alternative to the hope of the race as centred in Christ, one is struck with the difficulty of encountering anything that has not some savour of the spirit of Christianity. Modern thought and activity seem to be impregnated with a fervour native to the Galilean hills. And poor and partial as that fervour must seem to those who know the glow of Galilean religion at closer quarters, yet its very palpitations in modern motive and literature testify to the vital force with which religion has impregnated us, if only as the flutter of the heart testifies to the presence of life in one whose vitality is low. So far from the ' old ' religion having failed, the difficulty seems rather to be to get away from it anywhere.

In making the restoration of man contingent on the free human response, Christ adopted the only course really suited to our nature. All is voluntary. All is optional. And the voluntariness seems to be vindicated by the breakdown of coercive methods wherever they have been attempted. His eye pierced through law and habit to the buried sonship. He saw there, as the key to the whole position, the free quality of Love. It is an arresting fact, and one far too little dwelt upon by readers of the Gospels, that He Who at least believed Himself to be invested with Divine authority should have contented Himself with addressing man in the mild terms of *Invitation*. He came saying: 'Follow Me.' He 'looked on' the apostate disciple. He 'wept over' the unresponsive city. He could do no more. To have attempted more would have been to achieve nothing.

§ 10. *Objection that Righteousness implies Consistency of Conduct*

Some will no doubt say that this clashes with the insistence which Christ was constantly putting on individual righteousness. The reply is that the 'righteousness' on which Christ laid such stress was transcendent righteousness, not mere conformity to a given attainable standard. In one sense the Christian standard is for ever unattainable. 'Be ye perfect as your Father in

Heaven is perfect.' Therefore, measured by its standard, Christian life must ever show default. Yet a lower standard, however relatively high, must in course of progress have been attained and exhausted. And once a standard is attained there can be no spiritual life, for the law of the *élan de la vie* nowhere holds so rigorously as in the sphere of restoration. We shall all agree that mere consistency is of small value compared with the kind of standard with which men are expected to be consistent. We applaud our poets when they tell us that 'a man's reach should exceed his grasp.' Christ's religion claims to be judged by a criterion no less severe. A consistency that is one half truce with our lower nature brings us nowhere. It was easy enough to win a 'Lord, Lord' from the lips, but Christ aimed at effecting an organic change within the nature of man. To Him the problem of 'human improvement' was not that of the politician, but that of the physician. 'Ye must be born anew' is the drastic remedy proposed. Compared with this, government and environment are like the regimen of diet, or the change of air, of which the patient may no doubt avail himself with advantage, but which are powerless to effect any improvement while the seat of the disease remains unattacked. The diagnosis of the Great Physician is that the will is alienated, and the affections are estranged from the

norm of spiritual health. Of that norm we have seen humanity to be conscious much in the same way as the patient is aware of what health would be could be only attain it. To that norm humanity has been desiring passionately to adjust its forces, just as the patient grasps at every means which offers to effect his restoration. It is here that Christ, purifying and vivifying the consciousness, claiming to satisfy in Himself the desire for the readjustment of the vital forces, comes to do for and in man what nothing else ever claimed to do, for the remedy is on a par with the diagnosis. All that is wanted is the patient's willingness to place himself in the Physician's hands, and carry out His instructions. And the very unwillingness in many cases to do this is a testimony to the accuracy of the diagnosis, and the profound knowledge of the clinical conditions. The anomalies attendant on the history of Christ's appeal to man do but vindicate His religion both in its knowledge of the springs of human conduct, and its refusal to be satisfied with anything less than ἡ καινὴ κτίσις, a 'new creation.'

§ II. *Future Stages of Existence assumed in the Christian Process of Restoration*

While it is no argument to say that the Christian looks to a future life for the establishing of what is begun and very imperfectly begun here, ought

we not in justice to the ideal of Christ to take into consideration His plan as a whole? It is difficult to see how anyone judging religion, whether he believes in it or not, can help taking into account the fact that the hope of mankind, according to Christ, is placed much less in this present scene of existence than in that of which He Himself gave the strongest proof. Response to Him involves us in the belief in issues and activities vast indeed in comparison with this present scene, to which the vision of many is unhappily limited. To attempt to judge of the total achievement of Christ without taking this fact into account is much on a par with committing the welfare of the race to the 'Little Englander' who shuts his eyes to the commerce and future of the world.

If the primary object of Christ were to 'make men good,' this line of reflection could obviously afford no relief from the inconsistency of Christian life. But as the primary aim of Christ was to effect man's reunion with God, a very great deal is to be said for the fact that He at the same time 'brought life and immortality to light,' and the impartial critic will at least admit that if Christ did not guarantee to finish His work of restoration within the present life, His work cannot be regarded as a failure if it looks to immortality for its completion.

It will also be admitted that the present life is

in many ways unsuited for that high uniformity of character which the Christian himself, no less than his critic, regards as so desirable. Individual righteousness and social justice cannot but be the pursuit of those who respond heart and soul to 'the just and beneficent Christ,' and yet the most unanimous co-operation with His Will is constantly thwarted and baffled both by physical limitations, and by the mixed state of public opinion. If it is objected that this admission seems an unworthy acquiescence in present conditions, it may be asked whether those who look for an earthly paradise have not to acquiesce in exactly the same limitations? Are not those who are most to the fore in seeking the present salvation of society forced to admit that at present the aims of Collectivism are not fulfilled, and that it would be folly for the individual at present to act upon them? True, they expect them to be fulfilled in time, but then their 'time' is as future a prospect as the Christian's 'hereafter.' Are the earnest Secularist and the Christian so far apart in this? Was there ever yet anything great or noble that had not its 'anchor within the veil'? It would rather seem that all who passionately desire the good of mankind are at one in this. We are all 'saved by hope.' For all of us 'the goal is ever on before,' though the Secularist measures his hope by the clock, and the Christian by the soul. Both 'seek a city out

of sight.' Both derive their energy from 'things unseen.'

'The end? What end? Nay, where is any end  
To us who thrive on infinite delay?

We strive to-day,  
But in to-morrow live; and from the heart  
Of futures unexplored fulfil our part.'

If then delay of consummation be inevitable one way as another, what objection can there be to taking into account the future completion of man's restoration?

§ 12. *The Actual Course of History foreseen and foretold by Christ*

If Christ had claimed to institute a perfect Church, i.e. a Church whose members were to act consistently with a given standard, His work must, in the light of history, have been pronounced a failure. But it is very certain that Christ never claimed that it would be perfect in its present conditions. As a matter of fact the evils we are keeping in view are exactly such as He foretold. He was ever guarding His followers against the shock of 'offences.' 'It must needs be that scandals come,' He declared, while pronouncing His terrible woe against those who wilfully caused them. And all His most characteristic teaching about His Church is of the same mixed nature. It is like a net, enclosing good fish and bad; a field in which



tares sown by the enemy mingle with the wheat ; a flock from which there are some going astray ; a little leaven, influenced by, as well as influencing the dough. If He had spoken otherwise then, indeed the case for the Kingdom would go hard ; but if the Kingdom has turned out exactly as was foreseen and announced by Christ, is it fair to judge it after a fashion and expectation wholly different ?

Again, as to the slow progress of the Kingdom, while not retracting one word of the censure which Christians may take to themselves for their slackness and unfaithfulness, yet did Christ or His Apostles lead us to expect that the human race would ever be regenerated as it exists on earth ? On the contrary, so far as Christ refers to the future at all, He leads us to suppose that the ' spirit of the world,' will to the end remain opposed to His aims. His parting commission to His Apostles was not to convert mankind, but to give mankind the chance of being converted, to be ' witnesses ' to Him, to bring His Kingdom before men's eyes, receiving all who would respond. With this agrees exactly the subsequent language of St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. John. It may be the ideal is open to criticism, but what we are here concerned with is not the ideal but the question whether the realisation tallies with that ideal. And again we may ask, is it fair to judge the realisation after an ideal entirely different ?

§ 13. *The 'lower goodness'*

We may hesitate to say, with the late Father Tyrrell, that 'the Church allows and provides for the non-religious temperament, and for the religious temperament in its non-religious moods.' It seems perilous to recognise 'a certain lower goodness.' Human nature is only too ready to rest satisfied with half measures. And yet it must be admitted that persons do exist who from ignorance or dullness of perception or some kindred limitation, do not seem destined for the front ranks of spiritual advance. Their religion is part inherited convention, part 'solid comfort when we die.' They are complaisant and conventional, and despite their baptism, their 'conversation' is not so much 'in Heaven' as in Gath. To the spiritual Bohemian touched with the 'great romance,' and the 'Divine adventure,' the existence of these persons is what Wilberforce would have called 'a heavy affliction.' Yet they have figured in every age. They belong to the Early Victorian order, which is not a period but a mood of mankind. The natural inequality of man forebodes their continuance.

What are they for? Mainly, for the development of charity in the rest. A spick-and-span Donatism would doubtless eliminate them, and 'the Church of the Future'—which is all some people have of religion in the present—may render them taboo.

The grand fact about the old religion is that it is big enough for even them. They may be inaccessible to the ideals of Christ, yet religion fences them with conventions without which they would utterly and eternally fall.

The demand for a uniform level of excellence within the Church is no new thing. Once, however, uniformity of excellence is postulated a standard is required. That standard is bound to be more or less arbitrary. The one inexhaustible standard supplied by Christ is 'your Father Which is in Heaven.' Again and again the large freedom of that standard has been disregarded, and a party has formed itself within the Church around some exemplary person whose standard has been at once lower and more difficult,—lower, because partial, more difficult because individualistic. This is the 'great man' of Emerson's 'nonconformity.' He breeds not a nonconformity, but a new conformity, the strength of whose devotion, fed by opposition and untempered by charity, dehumanises it. It crystallises into a sect, falls off from the main body, and then, cut off by spiritual pride from the channels of grace, sooner or later forsakes its original purpose, and furnishes a spectacle of the strife of brethren. Such is the result of arbitrary and impatient efforts at moral uniformity by methods of exclusion based for the most part in individual pride. Intolerance and exclusion defeat

their own ends. Cease to tolerate, and you have nothing to perfect. The real pioneers of the Church have been those who had no idea they were anything of the kind. That is what has made the Church so inclusive. If an arbitrary standard were fixed, the best people would be the first to walk out.

§ 14. *The Difficulty presented by Christian Character largely a Psychological One*

Admitting the inconsistent record of Christian history and character, may we not fairly say that the difficulty they present is, after all, largely psychological? It is of the same kind as that which we experience when one discordant note spoils our enjoyment of an entire phase of music, and lingers jarring the sensorium long after the phase itself is forgotten. The evil, by sheer dramatic force, outlives the good. Thus the papers which report the lapse of some unhappy priest from virtue are silent, necessarily silent, as to the lives of constancy and self-devotion led by thousands of other priests unknown to any save their Master and their flock. Whenever we really penetrate the interior history of any age, and attempt to form a just notion of its total activities and characteristics, we find that the censurable practices occupy a much smaller space on the whole canvas than we had been led to think. The darkest of

the 'dark ages' is luminous with quiet consistent piety when its detail comes to be explored. The names of Theodora and Marozia, e.g. render the tenth century a proverb for vileness, and yet we find the father and brothers of that same Theodora ranking among the brightest examples of Christianity in their age. In the description left us of the parents and home circle of St. Ignatius Loyola we catch a glimpse of the consistent life of the average Spaniard at the very time when the destruction of Mexico and Peru were smirching so hideously the catholic reputation of Spain. Even that melancholy episode in Spanish history is redeemed from unbroken rapacity and cruelty by numerous instances of mercy and good-will on the part of Alvarez's soldiers. This is not the place to discuss the ethics of persecution, but a measure of historic sympathy compels us to take even persecutors at the valuation of their highest motive and to admit that coercive methods—foreign as they are to the genius of Christ—if dictated by conviction of the truth of the principles enforced, and by solicitude for the general welfare, are not incompatible with mercy and charity.

To some extent it is inevitable that scandal should outlive virtue, but we need not deliberately treasure the discords and ignore the harmonies. The fault is, generally speaking, that we do not read history in a sufficiently large way. We identify

the total activities of an age with some one episode or characteristic which is in startling contrast with the rest of Christian practice.

§ 15. *Criticism the offspring of Christianity*

Whence comes this sensitiveness to inconsistency? The question goes to the root of the psychological nature of the difficulty presented. Mr. Stephen Phillips, in his daring poem, 'Christ in Hades,' at once crystallises the difficulty and unconsciously suggests the solution. He pictures Christ among the shades of the Underworld on the evening of the first Good Friday. There the poet marshals a grim pageant of apostasy with Prometheus as pageant-master. 'O Christ,' cries the Titan,

'Prepare Thee for the anguish! Thou shalt know  
 Trouble so exquisite that from his wheel  
 Happy Ixion shall spare tears for Thee,  
 And Thou shalt envy me my shadowy crag  
 And softly feeding vulture. Thou shalt stand  
 Gazing forever on the earth, and watch  
 How fast Thy words incarnadine the world.'

Whereupon Christ looks, and

'Human history  
 Before His eyes defiled. . . .  
 An endless host pervading host; Whom He  
 Their Leader mild, remorsefully reviewed,

And had no joy in them, although aloud  
 They called His Name, and their fierce faces glad  
 Looked up to Him for praise, all murmuring loud,  
 And bloody trophies towards Him flourished and waved.'

Such is the crimson generalisation of the Christian ages, endorsed no doubt by those who take Mr. Stephen Phillips's view of history. But the real interest of the vision centres not in the Christ, nor in the history that 'defiles before him,' but in the pageant-master. What Prometheus is this? Certainly not the Titan whose story we left on our desks at school! At any rate if it is he has undergone a change. He seems typical rather of the traditions of Exeter Hall than of the Athens of Pericles. Indeed, in all save the Christian graces of charity and fairness—possibly omitted, though even then hardly fairly, in order to leave a little local colour—Mr. Phillips's Prometheus has benefited by his time in Hades to the extent of becoming an exemplary if somewhat severe and melancholy Christian.

In short Mr. Phillips is guilty of a moral anachronism, and a very splendid one, for if Christianity is at the bar, Christianity is also the accuser!

Any one who has experience in the task of forming public opinion will know whether it is a light achievement so to penetrate a mass of people with a moral idea that they come to apply that

idea without the faintest notion that it is not their own! If this is an easy matter to accomplish, through all the seethe of half a dozen civilisations, then the task of Christianity has been lighter than acquaintance with the 'education problem' would dispose one to think. For what Christianity has succeeded in doing is nothing less than this: it has re-sensitised the general conscience, and given to it the property as of some magic mirror in which every action is reflected in its ideal form, and every departure from that ideal form is also registered with precision. If Christianity had done nothing else but imbue men, and that in spite of themselves, with a criterion of life such as this, the achievement must be confessed unique. A religion which has bitten so deeply into the spiritual constitution as to cause men to employ its standard even while they reject its claim, certainly is not the impotent *passé* thing which the arraignment of history and the cry for a new religion would make it appear.

#### § 16. *Summary and Conclusion*

We may now conveniently summarise the conclusions arrived at in the course of a long chapter. It is admitted that many evils have attended man's response to Christ, and do still attend it. But it is submitted that these very evils witness to an appeal on the part of Christ to the element of free choice in man, and so testify to His mastery of the spiritual



problem ; it is further submitted that the progress of a movement which appeals to the free choice of the world at large and of its own adherents in particular, must necessarily be slow and unequal, but that in process of this movement Christianity has quickened and enlightened the conscience, and evoked a new public opinion, and that the very censure of inconsistency is due to this vital Christian training. In addition to all this it is maintained that Christianity has achieved the reformation of character, with the co-operation of the individual's will, as nothing else has done or seems likely to do. And, lastly, that such a course as is here epitomised was foreseen by Christ, who never contemplated the catastrophic improvement of mankind.

In aiming at the renewal of human nature by Divine agency, and to that intent appealing to the most radical instincts in the race, Christ revealed Himself Master of the situation,—a mastery which has been magnificently vindicated wherever its essential conditions have been granted.

Thus, on the practical score, the need for a new religion would seem to break down. There is not only nothing to take the place of what we have, but, the conditions of the human problem being what they are, it seems impossible to imagine anything calculated to meet them that will not be

a rehabilitation of the Religion of Jesus Christ. 'Human nature,' it has been profoundly said, 'is naturally Christian,' and if the consciousness of God and the desire for union with Him are a real and tangible part of human nature, it seems but rational to suppose that the interpretation of religion which reveals the Person of God and the conditions of union with Him, and which, when accredited and responded to, has given men and women their spiritual freedom and objective, should remain in all essentials the supreme spiritual force in the world.

It is easy, when we look only on the side of human failure, and consider the religion of Christ only as reflected in the necessarily inadequate statements of man's understanding, detached from their complement in instinct, and especially from a spiritual progress at which we ourselves may have ceased to aim, to pronounce it a failure. But such superficial views never help us, and we shall scorn to be misled by the kind of thing which in any department of material progress would be rejected as worthless. We do not want to waste time with party aims and cries. What we want is the root of the matter. The race is increasing by leaps and bounds, and the immense multitudes of men and women crying for light and life form an appalling responsibility for those to whom God has given in some measure to think for the rest.

The only thing that can meet the demand of this teeming burden of existence is that 'Life which is in His Son.' How long shall we play round the outer fringes of civilisation when His words are explicitly confirmed by the cry for religion anew ?

## IX

### Institutional Religion

Wherever religion arises at once a religious society appears, and immediately a religious society is formed, it produces government.—Guizot, *European Civilisation*, Lecture V.

The Event at Bethlehem was of the Year One ; but all years since that, nineteen hundred of them now, have been contributing new growth to it—and see where it stands, the Church ! Touching the earth with one small point, springing out of one small seed-grain, rising out therefrom, ever higher, ever broader, till no star can be seen but through *it*. From such a seed-grain so has it grown, planted in the reverences and sacred opulences of mankind ; fed continually by all the noblenesses of some sixty generations of men.—CARLYLE.

Blest are the natures shored on every side  
With landmarks of hereditary thought !  
Thrice happy they who wander not lifelong  
Beyond near succour of the Household Faith,  
The guarded Fold that shelters, not confines.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

- § 1. Prejudice against institutional religion. § 2. The function of exclusiveness, historic. § 3. The exclusive Christ. § 4. The justification of the paradox. § 5. 'Comprehensiveness' detrimental. § 6. The difficulty presented by creed. § 7. What is creed ? § 8. Discrimination necessary between fact and statement of fact. § 9. The creed a register of Christ's revelation. § 10. Creed, the response of intellect. § 11. Informed by the life of the spirit. § 12. The place of creed in spiritual worship. § 13. Catholic ardour and modern reticence. § 14. The discipline of the devout life. § 15. The faith and discipline of the Church in relation to the foregoing chapters.

§ 1. *Prejudice against Institutional Religion*

HAVING seen religion to be one of the ultimate instincts of the race, and having traced the course of that instinct up to its response in Christ, it seems impossible to leave the survey without an attempt to remove any prejudice that may exist against Christianity on the *institutional* side.

By the institutional side is meant that aspect of Christianity which consists of Church and Creed. That prejudice does possess many minds against this aspect is a fact of such common expression that it would be idle to ignore it. Nor is it at all strange that it should be so, considering the mixed character of our traditions and education. There are numbers of people amongst us, quite well disposed towards Christianity in the abstract—if indeed Christianity can ever be spoken of ‘in the abstract’—to whom Church and Creed are terms of opprobrium and signals for revolt. Such persons often have a sincere veneration for Christ, and numbers of them profess to be extending His Kingdom, and, in a manner, no doubt are. It is all the more pity, therefore, that they should remain under a misunderstanding as to that which, to say the least, has proved the great preservative of all that they hold so dear. In proportion as we are convinced of Christianity as the conserver of the original religious impulse, the whole of the

institutional side of Christianity ought to appeal to us.

We have seen that Christianity alone supplies order and correlation to the scattered types of the religious instinct throughout the world, and that it does so by being inclusive enough to embrace what is common to all. What, however, may not have been so clearly brought out in the survey is that this inclusiveness is the result of a method of exclusion,—an exclusion quite as rigorous as that of natural selection. Thus the preservation of the original impulse has been secured at the cost of a ruthless avoidance of those types which tend to spiritual sterility. For example, had Christianity included the absolutism of the Scribes, spiritual progress would have been impossible. This is only one example, out of a host of such, going to prove that the religion of Christ owes its catholicity to its power to disregard detrimental issues. But this is nothing else than the most rigorous kind of exclusiveness.

Now the objection urged against the Church by those whom we have in mind is just this exclusiveness. They dislike the very idea of a society within society, a society swayed by its own interests, governed by laws of its own, and seeming by its very existence to ban all who are not of its number. We find men saying, 'I look upon humanity as my church,' and, though it may sound

rather magniloquent, they are quite sincere in their avowal. They are suspicious of anything that seems to narrow human interests, and they are terribly afraid of appearing to set themselves above the common level of mankind. This attitude was aptly described by the *Spectator* a short time ago :

‘People to-day distrust all verbal display of religion, and indeed of goodness altogether. They consider, indeed, that a man has a right to “maintain his integrity,” as Job said, and no more. Their feeling in this matter was never more marked than it is to-day. The stereotyped language of religious profession is taboo in the society of the cultivated.’<sup>1</sup>

The words sound like a satire from William Law, did we not know them to be the voice of modern public school religion. ‘The true church,’ they tell us, ‘is mankind. Why be sectarian? Why sacrifice the whole to a part? Why identify yourself with a creed? Whatever is true and worthy in the belief of mankind will survive. Propaganda is not only useless; it is rather unbecoming. Let us do justly and seek peace with all men, and neither make too much of this present world, nor wholly transfer our attention to what may be afterwards.’

## § 2. *The Function of Exclusiveness, Historic*

Upon reflection, a very deep truth is seen to underlie this idea of humanity being the Church.

<sup>1</sup> June 18, 1910.

In a certain potential sense it is, but then comes the question, How can its possibilities be realised? How can its aspiration be fulfilled, and its truth purified? Nay, the question is an historical one: How *have* they been? The answer is: By exclusion. No great spiritual idea has ever made its appearance without being incarnated in a society, the very existence of which depends on the exclusion of those who do not share the idea. If truth and faith are working ideas they must lead to the formation of some kind of society. If we stand aloof from such, in the attempt to make humanity our church, how are we to thread our way among all its contradictory phases, its conflicting beliefs, and varying standards? Is not the actual truth this: that those who speak most confidently about humanity being their church, are least concerned with the actual sordid task of trying to set wrong right, and making the world a little better than they found it? The men who, like Mazzini, have enlarged our conception of the parish of God, did their bit all the while, and were propagandists, if not actual martyrs. Man is a sectarian animal, and directly he gets hold of a bit of the real thing he is moved to share it out, and becomes the nucleus of a propaganda, whether he will or not. In this selection is inevitable. Truth is itself selection. 'Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.' Even Comte, in all his longing for the brotherhood



of man, tells us that in forming our conception of humanity we must not take in all men, but only those who are really assimilable by virtue of a real co-operation. And Cotter Morrison expressed his desire to eliminate those who are without altruistic affection. Directly, then, we give rein to the desire to see mankind better, and bend our energies to the practical task of improvement, we become exclusive, even though our 'religion,' like that of Comte and his English exponent, is the religion of humanity itself.

### § 3. *The exclusive Christ*

But if exclusiveness attends all attempts to benefit mankind, it can no longer be an objection to the Church. If we regarded the latter more simply and really as the response to Christ we should be far less sensitive to the implied stigma. A modern novelist says of one of his characters: 'His immense capacity for friendship of the highest order rendered him exclusive.'<sup>1</sup> May not such words be reverently spoken of Christ? The whole thing turns on our personal relationship to Christ, and His to us. 'I have called you . . . friends.'<sup>2</sup> Those words cannot be used indifferently, cannot be thrown out so as to include all, independent of choice and desire. Originally the Church was a response to the Person of Christ by those who

<sup>1</sup> James Cassidy, *Father Paul*.

<sup>2</sup> St. John xi. 15.

accepted Him as being what He claimed to be. It was because they found in Him the Being of whom they were dimly conscious and after whom they were feeling, because they found that the satisfaction of their desire for forgiveness of sin, for freedom from its obsession, for happiness, for joy deep as the desire for it was insatiable—because they found all this to spring from their union with Christ that they banded themselves together to ‘witness’ to Him, to worship Him, to spread to others a knowledge of all He was to them, and to receive Him through the channels He Himself had appointed. This was the origin of the Church. This is the object of the Church’s existence to-day.

It is in the last-mentioned object that we come to the actual *raison d’être* of the Church as response. For the worship of the Christian is not a ‘hero-worship’: it is a veritable communion with God in Christ. It is not merely the following of an example, the attachment to a leader, it is renewal, increase of grace, direct experience of God in Christ. The *raison d’être*, then, of the Church is the sacraments. The sacraments do not go with individualism. They are fundamentally social. They are as social as they are exclusive. The individual may elect to stand proudly alone. He may sincerely believe in Jesus Christ within his individual limitations. He may, to a very high degree, be stimulated and uplifted by the moral ideal of Christ as it swims

into his ken through the haze of many confusions. But he cannot penetrate the 'new name' and the mystic life, without sacramental incorporation with Christ. The response is and must be social and the sacraments are given for that very purpose. For anyone, then, to detach himself from the collective response to Christ, is virtually to detach himself from Christ.

#### § 4. *The Justification of the Paradox*

Hence the justification of the paradox. The method that forces exclusiveness leads to adhesion and therefore inclusion. It is from the central height of our spiritual response to Christ—the Eucharist—that we can look back over the past history of the race, and see unity gradually taking the place of division. All humanity before its completed at-one-ment in Christ tends to division. All that has occupied our attention in the earlier chapters of this survey confirms this. The development of the religious idea has been seen to take the form of a 'dispersive progress.' And yet mankind is one, and therefore its instinct one. The response to Christ in the Church is the gradual resumption of that unity. That is why unity was the passionate desire of Christ Himself: 'That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee.' In the heart and mind of Christ was a conception of the race as it was intended to be,—as

truly one as is any individual. It was not only the unity of *present* peoples, races, spiritual divisions, that He yearned for : it was the unity of the past with the present as well—the consummation in unity of the entire man,—one with himself, and one with God. Humanity, being divided in itself, cannot discern even unity in nature, it certainly cannot in society, and least of all in the Divine Nature.

‘ Religion, from its most rudimentary forms to its perfect development, has been given to break down the walls of separation of man from nature, man from man, man from God. All ordinances, therefore, which set forth the realities of life as one in God are means for promoting the ends of religion, which is universal sympathy and fellowship with the Highest Will and Life.’<sup>1</sup>

This is why we say, ‘ I believe in the Catholic Church.’ We could not believe in a church that was not catholic. On the other hand, we could not have catholicity without a church. ‘ Religion appeals to that spiritual identity in the nature of man which is not least amid all the diversities of environment and culture.’<sup>2</sup> An exclusive church is in no contradiction with the fact disclosed by Comparative Religion, viz. that there never was and never can be more than one religion in the world, But if that unity latent beneath so many and bitterly antagonistic varieties is to become a real

<sup>1</sup> J. W. Farquhar, *The Gospel of Divine Humanity*, xiii.

<sup>2</sup> Galloway, *Principles of Religious Development*, p. 44.

unity it can only be by focussing the consciousness and desire upon one object ; and this as a matter of history has been the process of Christianity, and is to-day of all true missionary effort. And in response to this what do we find ? That all religious energy to-day is with Christianity. It does not matter where we look—to India, China, Japan—wherever nations are awaking to a more spiritual life it is Christianity that occupies their attention. Their eyes are turned, perhaps not yet to the Empty Tomb, but certainly to the Cross. It may be that we may have to look forward to an interval of semi-Arianism before the full power and revelation of Christ is realised, but once men's interest in Christ is awakened the full catholic faith is not far off. And in proportion as the Church herself is faithful in teaching the whole faith, unfashionable as it may be at the moment, will unity be hastened.

§ 5. '*Comprehensiveness*' detrimental

At the present time the plea for what is called 'comprehensiveness' is trying the faith of the Church, especially in those quarters above alluded to, and in the English colonies. As a practical plea, it is strategically worthless. If the object of Christianity were simply that of extending its numbers, then comprehensiveness would be the logical method. But the advocates of this method

seem to forget that Christianity is not theirs to do as they like with. They are in the responsible position of trustees to Christ, and guardians to the human race. If they spread Christianity by deleting its supernatural element, all they effect is the destruction of Christianity. A Christianity whose Christ is not the Son of God, the centre of men's salvation, the Virgin-born and Risen Saviour, is a mockery of men's hope, and will be rent in pieces of them so soon as they perceive the deception. The spiritual unity of the race will not be furthered otherwise than Christ set out to further it, by calling upon men to accept Him on His own terms. It is precisely this exclusiveness that makes Christianity not an innovation, but a restoration; not a monopoly, but a fulfilment. It is this that makes Christ the Alpha as well as the Omega, the 'fulfiller of the old' as well as the 'maker of all things new.' It is this that makes nonsense of the cry for a new religion; it is this that makes religion eternally new.

#### § 6. *The Difficulty presented by Creed*

Perhaps, however, it is not so much the Church in its selective and disciplinary character which causes us to hold aloof, as the limitation it seems to impose on our freedom of inquiry—in a word, it is less the Church than the creed.

It is all very well, it may be urged, to say that

the primary aim of a religious society must be, according to the definition of religion, to affirm *rightly* the 'consciousness of God,' and to guide *rightly* the 'endeavour after union with Him'; the fact remains that a creed is an inelastic thing, and commits us to that view of the truth which held good at the time the creed was formulated. On the other hand, nothing is plainer than that our conception of the truth changes. Our whole idea, for example, of nature has undergone a radical change since the last additions were made to the Christian creed. Is it possible for any man who is really living in the present to remain thus tethered to the past?

Is not this the root of the difficulty? It is not so much, be it observed, a question of the truth or falsity of the creed as of the incapacity of the thought of one generation to regulate that of another. It is not, or not necessarily, the Christian creed we object to: it is to creed in general; it is the principle of thinking in stereotype.

### § 7. *What is Creed?*

If this is a fair statement of the difficulty, we shall find that it really consists in the failure to discriminate between two things in themselves of a quite different order from each other, viz. fact, and statement of fact. The creed is a statement of fact, or at least of alleged fact. It is immaterial

to the discussion of the difficulty whether we accept the creed or not, since it is in the *principle* of creeds that the difficulty lies. Any portion of the creed is an intellectual statement of a fact or operation relating to God, or to the relation between God and man. The existence of the Divine Being, for example, is a *fact*; the doctrine of the Trinity is a *statement* of that fact. The doctrine of Baptism is a statement of both a fact and an operation. Now the *facts* are spiritual; the *statement* of them is intellectual. In response to man's instinct God has addressed Himself to man's spiritual nature. Intimately bound up, however, with our spiritual nature is our intellectual understanding. Where the spiritual revelation is wrested intellectually to error—and there is always a danger of this—it has been the function of the Church, as possessed of the Holy Spirit,<sup>1</sup> to give the spiritual truth its, approximately, intellectual equivalent, and that in such a form as shall secure a minimum possibility of false interpretation.

§ 8. *Discrimination necessary between Fact and Statement of Fact*

Now nothing is more obvious than that we have to discriminate between the statement and the fact or operation which the statement defines.

<sup>1</sup> 'The Spirit of truth, . . . shall guide you into all truth,' St. John xvi. 13.



Thus the *doctrine* of the Trinity will not be confused with the *existence* and *nature* of the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity, as preserved in the Creed of Athanasius, is the last possibility of an intellectual apprehension of the Divine Nature. It is the ultimate intellectual statement of 'the consciousness of God.' But, after all, it is a *statement*: the spiritual reality transcends it. Even now the spiritual perception presses beyond it, and aspires to know after the same manner as we are known.<sup>1</sup> It follows, then, that, as compared with the spiritual reality, all doctrine is approximate only. The creed is at best an intellectual *handle* for the spiritual instrument—faith.

But, as it is the verbal equivalent to spiritual fact, objections to it on the score of our changing conceptions cannot hold. It is related purely to a spiritual order to which our material conceptions have to accommodate themselves. And, however much language which is built up of such conceptions may change, the fact which it enshrines has the same fixed and final value, when interpreted in agreement with the meaning which the language held when the statement was written. Otherwise there would be no permanent value in language, nor any use in registering thought. The fact of the flux of language, so often put forward as an argument against creed, really cuts at the root

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 12.

of all continuity of thought, and, in the long run, at the solidarity of the race. As a matter of fact, language, while it fluctuates in application, holds an identity of meaning. Considered, then, as an intellectual statement, the creed depends on the meaning of the language at the time it was framed, and the endeavour to understand this—and it is a perfectly easy task—puts us afresh into touch with the spiritual concept which gave rise to it.

When we take into account the fact that faith is only worthy of the name when all the elements of our nature are freely and characteristically operative within us, we shall recognise how essential is the function of creed, as representing the intellectual part. The reader will recall how Carlyle admitted towards the end of his life that the little Greek letter ‘iota,’ which, in the Creed of Nicæa, distinguishes the word ‘homo-ousios’ (meaning ‘of the same substance’) from ‘homoi-ousios’ (meaning ‘similar in substance’) saved Christianity at the time of the great Arian controversy. As a young man he had been wont to pour scorn on a difference apparently so trifling.<sup>1</sup> Yet not the most orthodox at Nicæa—nor since—would affirm that ‘homo-ousios’ was *adequate* to express the Divine Nature of the Son of Man. It was the best that the subtlest medium of intellectual expression, the Greek lan-

<sup>1</sup> See J. A. Froude, *Carlyle in London*, vol. ii.

guage, could furnish, and it caught and fixed for all time what the Son of Man Himself taught, viz. His absolute equality with the Father. But what He taught and what He is as much transcend Nicene statement as the starry heavens transcend the lake in which they are mirrored.

Objections to creed, therefore, from the standpoint of our changing conceptions, are answered by the spiritual purpose of the Creed. It registers God's response to man. It is a part of man's response to Him. That the vehicle should be that of language, built up of altogether different values, matters little beside this spiritual purpose. On the contrary, that the intellectual should be brought into play at all is a fact of the utmost significance. It is far too little dwelt upon to-day in this connection. Creed, in the intellectual sense of which we have been speaking, is a thing peculiar to Christianity. It is due to the inner aim of Christianity to secure the unity of our nature: it is to the *whole* man, to the intellect no less than the rest, that God responds, just as it is the whole man that feels after Him. Those religious societies which aim at being more inclusive by dispensing with creed are, unconsciously, maiming the man in mutilating the response. Perhaps this explains the fact that the more nearly a religious society approaches a creedless condition, the more its practical efficiency is diminished.

§ 9. *The Creed a Register of Christ's Revelation*

'The words that I speak unto you,' said Christ, 'they are spirit, and they are life.'<sup>1</sup> 'The words,'—words they were. Although He did not commit His Divine disclosure to writing He commissioned His apostles His witnesses. The writings of the New Testament are part of that 'witness': the Creed which, at any rate in a rudimentary state, preceded these writings, is a part of that witness. The Triune Mystery which Christ disclosed becomes the framework of that Creed. Exception is often taken to the Creed on the score of its departure from the 'naïve' and unpremeditated language of Christ. Due allowance must be made for the nature of a creed as a summary statement of what is elsewhere found *in extenso*. The point is, does this creed ever *depart* from the revelation of Christ? Take any connection in which His habitual thought is manifested, and we find this triune conception disclosed. Does He, for example, speak of prayer? It is to be offered in His Name, but it is to be directed to The or Our Father, and it is assisted and informed by The Spirit. Does He refer to the Father's knowledge and care as they extend throughout creation? A similar knowledge and care are exercised by The Son, while upon The Spirit devolves

<sup>1</sup> St. John vi. 63.

the task of watching over and guiding the Church. Again, to accept or deny the Son is to accept or deny The Father, and *vice versâ*, while the most terrible of all pronouncements He ever made is directed against the denial of the Spirit.

The doctrine of the Trinity, then, the framework of the Creed, is nothing less than the Divine Consciousness of Christ. Its appeal to the intellect is a very strong one, so much so that it is difficult to see how any person of average intelligence can rest in the idea of a Personal God without it. Even abstracted from its spiritual context in eternal life and love, and regarded in a purely intellectual light, it offers nothing contrary to reason. For while three infinities were unthinkable, Three Persons in the mystic unity of One Infinite Being are not unthinkable, provided they are conceived as being 'co-equal and co-eternal,' provided we 'neither confound the Persons, nor divide the Substance.' The mistake those make who reject the Creed because of its unsimilarity with Christ's teaching is that they do not respond to its appeal to the intellect. They are right in their affirmation of the Divine Unity; they are wrong in denying the Tri-Unity: for, if Christ did not teach that, or rather disclose it with every revelation of the inner working of His thought, then His words are beyond all possibility of interpretation.

§ 10. *Creed the Response of Intellect*

Christianity has always been on the side of the intellect in this : that it has maintained the revelation of Christ against an Arian tendency as old as that which led to His crucifixion. Perhaps this Divine rationalism was never more needed than to-day. The world is full of the paradox of persons who, on the plea of reason, deny the reasonableness of the Faith. Of one thing we may be perfectly certain—because the history of Christian thought shows nothing more plainly—that the *whole* interpretation of our consciousness of God as revealed in Christ will not long survive the rejection of any part of it. And if that whole interpretation should be rejected in favour of a mere 'Fatherhood' or a mere Spiritism, which Christ never revealed at all, our religious consciousness will be reduced to some partial stage of response where the human instinct is warped and stunted, and still further estranged from the object of its desire. In the one-sided and defective reasoning of those who would banish the Creed from the place it has always held we see another of those 'detrimental institutions,' which, like the Pharisaism of the Jew, and the ethicism of the present day, effectively bars the path of spiritual progress.

§ II. *Informed by the Life of the Spirit*

After all, is not our difficulty about the Creed met in the same way as that about the Church? We have not been in the habit of viewing either of them as a response to Christ. We have regarded the Church as a pedantic authority engaged in 'crystallising' the poetry of Christ's revelation, and consequently the creed as the sterile outcome of such process. How entirely this falls to the ground when, through the medium of actual history, we find that we owe all the 'poetry' of Christ to the conserving agency of creed! It is only when we view the Church, as has been vividly said, 'cross-questioned by heresy,' that we realise the inevitableness of creed and of that very 'crystallisation' of thought which we have been finding so repugnant. We open our history and, century by century, almost decade by decade, we see the revelation of Christ challenged and menaced by ignorant or wilful misrepresentation, or by the fascination of parallel yet alien currents of thought. And we have to bear in mind that *perversion* of that revelation amounts to extinction,—the extinction of all for which mankind has striven and longed. To save mankind from that fate we see the Church banning, one after another, the false issues which would tempt her away from her Lord and Life. Thus viewed, does not a change come over our way

of regarding the Creed? Do we not recognise it as at once the utterance and the safeguard of personal response?

§ 12. *The Place of the Creed in Spiritual Worship*

And the same reflection will meet the difficulty of those who find the recital of the Creed in public worship a distraction. The fact that they are joining in a worship based entirely on that Creed, a worship which could not be rendered if that Creed were not true, should sufficiently explain its essentially devotional character. Before the Creed existed in its present form we have it on the authority of Pliny that part of Christian worship consisted in 'singing a hymn to Christ as God,'—a hymn which, judging from the fragments of such hymnology scattered throughout the Epistles, was every whit as doctrinal as the historic Creed used to-day. Is not one compelled to ask, if he finds the recital of the creed a distraction; What is my worship? Am I worshipping 'Christ as God,' or am I engaged in some vague theistic worship, to which the facts of the Virgin Birth, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection are as foreign as they would have been in the Temple at Jerusalem?

§ 13. *Catholic Ardour and Modern Reticence*

This devotion to the Person of Christ cannot be expressed too ardently. As a rule, it is not the



abundance but the reticence of our devotion which is at fault to-day. It often seems that we are the losers by being so far removed from the reverent naïveté of an age at once simpler and more profound than our own. After all, at the root of modern Arianism there is something of a true instinct for a Christ who is human still, who weeps, smiles, woos, yearns, and entreats with an elemental humanity, and who does not disdain, in return, the most profound expressions of endearment. Is it not for lack of perception of the humanity of God in Christ that so many have lapsed from Catholic faith and devotion into the barren regions of Humanitarianism? There is an element of unreality in much of Christian worship and devotion to-day that needs purging, not by rationalism, but by spiritual intensity, by the fire of true penitence and true gladness. We need to model ourselves more on Richard Rolle and Bernard of Clairvaux. What language would be ours were we to raise our eyes from book or task, and see the Lord standing before us, as Mary saw Him in the Garden, or the fishermen upon the shore! And as surely as He was present with them is He present now upon His altars, and in the heart and mind of the believer.

#### § 14. *The Discipline of the Devout Life*

The great test, however, of a real devotion is not its expression in words, but the formation of rules

and habits which shall enshrine, guard, intensify it. This religion seeks to ensure by committing us to definite method. Yet is it not exactly here that people, inclined to be religious in some sort, take exception to the religious life? They say that the life of faith must be spontaneous, that we cannot rule the motions of the heart to order, that they wish in religion, as in all else, to be 'perfectly natural,' and refuse to put their lives under constraint. Very often they speak as though there were some analogy between their spiritual state and their bodily health. 'We are not perpetually taking our temperature,' they say, 'and why should we be morbidly solicitous for our spiritual health?' Why, indeed, if only the analogy held! But, alas, the fact is we are, spiritually, in that very condition which answers not to perfect physical health, but at best to convalescence. This is perhaps the hardest lesson for the average man and woman to learn. It strikes directly at our pride. We cannot endure to think that we have to place ourselves under treatment. It is *having to submit to the process of salvation* that turns away nine-tenths of those who fail to make their response to Christ.

This it is, too, that lends countenance to those spurious forms of the response which obtain amongst us from time to time. People are even willing to acknowledge that they 'have nothing

good to plead,' that they 'rely entirely on the mercy of God in Christ,' but they cannot stoop to take upon them His yoke, and carry out His method of submission and humility. They come to the Physician, but they refuse His prescription. They do not recognise in the Church a great school of spiritual health, a great training-ground for contest, where discipline is above all things necessary. They believe, or they prefer to think they believe, that there is some magic in the mere belief in a statement, that salvation is a kind of talismanic effect. They have no notion of the Church as a nursing mother, or that any weight or obedience is due to nineteen centuries of response to Christ, or that the Church was commissioned by Him from the beginning to administer His rule to the life-seeking soul.

For the chronicles of the original response to Christ—the New Testament—show nothing more plainly than that even after the gift of the new life, even after receiving 'the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drinking His Blood,' we are still struggling against the deadly 'law of sin in our members.' The desire which has been estranged from God's will for countless generations cannot be at once restored to its norm in Christ. The new life has to fight its way slowly, and with many a set-back against the all but relentless possession of disease. And, added to this, there is always the possibility

of relapse. A humbling picture? No doubt. But it is not religion, it is our own heart that we have to thank for the humbling. After all, better humbling than despair. And it is no doctrine of despair that the Church thus faithfully brings before us. It is, on the contrary, one of hope, and, if we are willing, certitude—the certainty that if we respond to Christ, He will respond to us, and will ‘work in us to will and to do of His good pleasure.’

§ 15. *The Faith and Discipline of the Church  
in relation to the foregoing chapters*

In conclusion, the reader’s attention is invited to the following statement of the Church’s faith, which also will be found to summarise the principal conclusions arrived at independently in the course of these pages.

Religion is an expression of the consciousness of God and the desire for union with Him. This consciousness is obscured and opposed by sin, which consists in a personal estrangement from God, springing from an aboriginal abuse of man’s freedom, the disabilities of which have been inherited by the whole human race. The fact of sin is not an article of revelation, but has been admitted, though without the discovery of a remedy, by men in all stages of history. The ‘doctrine’ or explanation of sin, however, is entirely due to revelation, and

all attempts to explain the fact otherwise fail to cover the whole of the phenomena presented. The doctrine which arose out of response to Christ is alone complete and coherent.

To the opposition of sin, Christ opposes Himself, His personal Love and Power, making our reunion with the law of our life dependent upon our union with Him; and at the same time revealing fully and clearly in Himself the Being Whose Life constitutes that law, and of Whose Presence man has been continuously, though obscurely, aware. His humanity—that of man before his lapse—took form in a human mother by the direct Divine operation—a fact which is not put forward as a credential of His authority, but as a fact of spiritual necessity, and the same is to be said of those exceptional powers or extensions of personality which marked His earthly course from first to last. Christ is thus human and Divine. This statement involves no contradiction in reason. His sufferings and death were necessities of His human limitation, and, because voluntarily undergone, constitute an eternal sacrifice by which He fulfils that part of the claim of God upon our perfect obedience which, as concerned with the past, we were unable to satisfy. His resurrection was the return from actual death of His body in the true or spiritual human form. Its significance for mankind is profound, embracing as it does the whole of our

life and every common act, and in particular, consecrating the body as the abode of the Holy Ghost and the medium of the Incarnate Life.

This in Christ the Divine Being of the universal consciousness is revealed as a Divine Society, called by Christ The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, eternal in the Unity of Love. Our desire for union with this Being is purified from the distorted and revolting expressions given it through ignorance and estrangement, and directed through the channels of the sacraments to its fulfilment in the Divine Life and Love.

This union, however, is not realised by absorption but by co-operation. There is therefore no cessation of responsibility, or forfeiture of that freedom which is the basis of human individuality. It therefore guarantees us an everlasting life of love, joy, truth, and service. This is what is termed in the revelation of Christ not merely everlasting life, but 'eternal' life, as marking it off from the life of the senses. It is thus a *present* quality of life, but it includes the idea of duration as well. This is that Life which is said to be 'in the Son,' and of which Christ said: 'Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood ye have no "Life" in you,' and of which also He spoke when He said: 'I am come that they might have "Life."' It is indeed the very life which we forfeited by our estrangement from God, yet the

indestructible germ of which has ever survived in the religious consciousness.

Responding to this offer of the restoration of the forfeited life in Christ there has arisen the Church, characterised as 'The Body of Christ' because the extension of His Incarnation. But because allegiance within it is dependent on the free choice of each individual member it has contained both error and unworthy action. In spite of this, however, the Spirit of Christ has through it penetrated and quickened the spiritual sense of mankind, raising the tone of the whole world. As a society it welds, or should weld, all members in one essential unity, corresponding to the unity which exists in the Godhead. This is at present far from realised, but the postponement is entirely due to the lack of a more ardent spiritual response to Christ. Many persons, apart from this Church, live excellent moral lives. Moral excellence, however, is no substitute for union with God, and, of itself, only tends in the long run to further isolation.

In addition to their common love of Christ, and the sharing of a sacramental life, Christians are held together by a firm belief in all that Christ revealed. This belief has ever been most jealously guarded against misunderstanding both intellectual and spiritual, and is called the Creed. It is a summary utterance devoted to the true conception of union with God in Christ. It has thus a

reasonable place in Christian worship, and expresses, as adequately as language can, that spiritual faith which is the historic and present response of the soul to the Divine Being of Whom it has ever been conscious and Whom it has ever desired.



## X

### Wanted,—A Venture of Faith

Religion's all or nothing: it's no mere smile  
O' contentment, sigh of aspiration, sir—  
No quality o' the finelier tempered clay  
Like its whiteness or its lightness; rather, stuff  
O' the very stuff; life of life and self of self,  
I tell you men won't notice. When they do,  
They'll understand. BROWNING.

§ 1. The object of this book. § 2. What is here urged not a return to the past. § 3. Nor a repudiation of intelligence. § 4. Present religious tendencies. § 5. In education. § 6. In the pulpit. § 7. In contrast to these, the result of a venture of faith.

#### § 1. *The Object of this Book*

THESE pages have been written in the hope of directing the thoughts of plain people to that in which religion fundamentally consists; and with a view to asking whether we are really prepared to repudiate the old spiritual life of love and obedience, and set out on a quest which, wherever it lead us, can certainly bring no rest, no assurance, no growth of soul, no lasting service.

The fact that it is a vital, not an intellectual,

process, to which we owe all that Christianity has done in preserving and fulfilling the original impulse of religion, points out the real nature of our need to-day, viz., that of a vital experience of prayer, penitence, worship, and self-sacrifice. It is this that is at the back of our cry for a 'new religion.' In an age of argument and critical inquiry we have come to forget how personal and dynamic a thing religion really is. It has ceased to grip us because we have been thinking about it instead of acting upon it.

We make the mistake of speaking and reasoning about religion as though we stood apart from it, —as though it were a part of the spectacle of life. We omit the experimental test. That is to say, we omit nine-tenths of science. It is all very well to say that experiment in religion begs the question. So it does in everything. The man who sets out to build up a business commits the *petitio principii* of believing he can do it. The whole world must either beg the question or beg its bread. In no other department of life do we hesitate to experiment boldly on the lines laid down by the particular object of inquiry; only in religion, for some unaccountable reason, do we stand aloof, and content ourselves with applying to a thing so essentially inward and spiritual a critical apparatus borrowed from purely external fields of observation.

§ 2. *What is here urged not a Return to the Past*

The plea that we should commit ourselves wholly to religion, as taught and administered by the Church, in entire faith in Jesus Christ involves nothing retrograde. On the contrary, what is urged is an advance, a personal adjustment of the individual to facts and forces previously unrecognised. When Wesley, in the meeting-room in Fetter Lane, 'felt his heart strangely warmed, and knew that he had peace with God,' he was not returning to an old religion, and most certainly he was not discovering a 'new' one. What had happened was the adjustment of all the powers of his heart and mind to spiritual forces of which he had no practical knowledge till then. The process was not an intellectual one. It did not even approximate to such. It was the venture of the whole man upon God.

Or, take the case of one whose faith in the creed of his childhood has been 'undermined' by critical inquiry. Let us suppose—and the case is far from being a merely supposititious one—that years and experience beget a spiritual condition which finds its natural expression in the very creed previously rejected. Has such a one returned to the religion of his childhood? Outwardly, he may seem to have done so, yet the man himself knows there has been no 'return,' that the faith which

was rejected on literary or philosophic grounds was never really held by him, or even known to him. What has happened has been an advance into a sustained discovery, and the secret has been, as in the case of Wesley, as in that of the disciples, a venture of the whole heart and mind on Christ.

§ 3. *Nor a Repudiation of Intelligence*

Are we then to repudiate altogether the intellectual element, to reject everything in the nature of evidence, critical inquiry, and the discoveries of science? By no means. 'A free intellectual life,' says the Bishop of Oxford, 'is essential to religion. A religion which cannot face facts, or assimilate all real knowledge, becomes a superstition.'<sup>1</sup> The objection that religion, in demanding a venture of experience, excludes the intelligence is simply the exaggeration of a just and necessary recognition. Religion does indeed transcend intellectual expression; the exaggeration lies in supposing it to be independent of the intelligence. The need, to which attention was directed in the preceding chapter, of discriminating between fact and the statement of fact, is one which has to be constantly borne in mind. 'All living belief,' says Dr. Figgis in a profoundly interesting paper on Newman,<sup>2</sup> 'is a reaction of the whole personality

<sup>1</sup> *Church Quarterly Review*, October 1911, pp. 104 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *English Church Review*, April 1912.

upon the material presented, and cannot be interpreted by the external modes of ratiocination.' Our faith is only really worthy of the name when all the elements that make up our nature are freely and characteristically operative within us.<sup>1</sup> Each of these—the will, the feeling, and the intelligence—makes its contribution to 'the fulness of the stature of the perfect man.' It is this perfect balance of the threefold nature that marks the transition, in the New Testament, from discipleship to apostleship. And it is such that is ever required in that response to Christ which guarantees religion against the abuses which have severally attended authority, experience, and reason. Only when our nature is at rest from undue stress on any one part of it are we free for the life of fellowship and service.

#### § 4. *Present Religious Tendencies*

It is peculiarly unfortunate that the claims of a spiritual faith should be further obscured to-day by the very marked tendency in religious quarters to thrust intellectual explanation into the place of spiritual religion. This is not confined to the universities or to technical theology. It has overflowed into our schools, our pulpits, our homes,

<sup>1</sup> The reader would do well to study carefully the first eighty pages of Baron von Hügel's *Mystical Element of Religion*, in which the relation of the three 'modalities,' as he there terms them, is worked out with great fulness and precision.

our ordinary intercourse. As Dr. Figgis well says : ' The critics would never have won half their vogue had not the [devotional] reading of the New Testament gone out of fashion. Their strength comes from their appealing to a world that has ceased to use the Bible devotionally.'<sup>1</sup> It is our present undevotional temper which places us at the mercy of the excesses of one-sided talent. The theological mind of the day is often so subjugated to analytic process as to be more or less incapable of the perception of spiritual issues. The work it turns out is mediated to the masses by men for the most part quite as inaccessible to the primitive appeal of religion—the lackeys of modernism who appeal to a people whose spiritual perception is blurred, in turn, by the dust and stress of life's arena. It is not the people's fault that there is so much unfaith. The fault is entirely that of their teachers—and for this reason : that while the need of an age so secularised as the present is supremely devotion and prayer, the teachers of the people yield to the spirit of the time and provide them only what is ' interesting ' from an intellectual or political or controversial point of view.

### § 5. *In Education*

Even in the teaching of children the tendency is to ' explain ' rather than to win the children's

<sup>1</sup> *Civilisation at the Cross-Roads*, pp. 201-3.

confidence in the objective reality of what is taught. Let anyone run his eye down a list of aids published for teachers, and what is the kind of thing he finds? 'The Creed simply explained,' 'The Early Narratives of the Bible explained,' 'Simple Explanations of the Catechism,' 'Explanatory Notes on the Gospels,' and so forth. In a number of cases, perhaps the majority, there is nothing wrong with the explanations themselves, the wrong lies with the method. Insensibly it leads the child to regard the understanding as the seat of religion. He grows up with this idea. He cannot divest himself of it. In after life the only two questions he ever dreams of asking about anything religious are: Is it useful? Can I understand it? Talk to the average man about making an act of faith, and it is seldom that he has any idea of what you mean.

It may well be questioned whether explanation has anything to do with teaching at all. In the religious sense, at any rate, the great model of all teaching is that presented by the Early Church in the 'catechism,'—the method of *echo*, as the word itself informs us,—and the aim of this was to ensure such a grounding in religious fact as would serve as a substratum for spiritual 'ventures' when the religious faculty developed. In contrast with this we are simply doing our best to-day to train children in the use of private judgment, all the while we know that when they grow up the majority of them

cannot possibly have either the materials at hand with which to form a judgment, or the leisure necessary for its formation. Apart, however, from that, and far more serious, is the neglect of the training of Faith.

### § 6. *In the Pulpit*

And what we find in schools we find to an even greater extent in the pulpit. The man who, after attending various London churches, exclaimed with a sigh; 'Isn't there anything one can take for granted?' gave a very fair idea of the extent to which the pulpit is intellectualised. It might be amusing, were it not so depressing, to find the first address of a course on Prayer entitled 'Can prayer be answered?' The great preachers of history, the friars, simply *taught* the people their faith, and then set them practising it. And the same thing holds of the evangelists who came after, men like Wesley, or Newman in his great Oxford period. Of course to such instances the reply is always forthcoming that the present age differs so greatly from theirs. It must indeed differ! It must be unique. And yet the age of Wesley and the age of Newman were rationalistic, and, if the friars addressed themselves to the ignorant, are there no ignorant to-day? Have we no passions and no sins? Is there no remorse, no shame, no longing? Have we fallen on an age when men are born knowing, and only



die in ignorance?—when all we need to know is how much of religion can be held compatibly with intellectual progress? Indeed in that case we do tower above Alexandria, and Florence, and all great congregations of men of old, and are something in the way of an epilogue to the human race!

If the Church really finds it urgent to 'meet intellectual doubt on its own ground,' it should surely be possible to arrange lectures and conferences for that object, delivered or conducted by competent persons. It is extremely questionable whether they would be of any use, but as a safety-valve for the superfluity of intellect with which the Church seems to be burdened at the present time they would certainly be welcomed by the faithful. As it is, few things could be more detrimental to religion than the constant intrusion of 'difficulties' on the notice of mixed congregations, often in the most superficial manner,—though sometimes the 'difficulty' is put with considerably more force than the solution. But, were it treated ever so satisfactorily, it is no substitute for prayer and the conviction of sin and the love of God in Christ. These are the things that are wanted. It is because of their absence from our pulpits that the multitude is turning away from the Church with the cry on its lips, 'Oh that I knew where I might find Him!'

The Pharisee and the Sadducee represented

between them moral pedantry and intellectual pedantry, and succeeded in killing off all but the indestructible germ of religion amongst the Jewish people. To-day the Pharisee and the Sadducee, in the shape of the Ethicist and the Modernist, are equally detrimental to the interests of all that Christ had at heart. They together produce an atmosphere in which no spiritual life can long survive, and unless their influence is countermined by a fresh and vigorous response to Christ, we, like the Jews of old, must pay the penalty.

In the darkest hour of Western destiny it was not morality, and it was not intellectual novelty, that saved the race. What had Christ for that 'hard pagan world' in which He appeared? He had no literature, no art, no 'ideas'—as the world counts them. He put forward no startling intellectual discovery. He gave no 'rational' demonstration. He founded no 'new religion.' Unique as was His Personality, 'new' as was the religious synthesis which love of Him produced in the hearts of His followers, He nevertheless had nothing that would not have been spurned with scorn by the Modernism and Ethics which dominate us to-day. For one arriving in the Augustan age of the world there surely could not have been a more inadequate equipment. Yet one thing He did, and out of that sprang a new hope, a new zeal, a new peace, a new

humanity: He struck the spiritual note, and man responded.

§ 7. *In contrast to these, the Result of a Venture of Faith*

Be our closing thoughts of calmer things. After a day of high winds and menacing sky there will often come an evening of heavenly serenity and light, when earth seems to be reposing in the hollow of the Hand that holds her, no longer buffeted and distressed, but at peace. Then is the time of growth, of gathered energy, of preparation for the fruitful morrow. And so also is it with the child of earth and of God. He also has his 'garish day,' his ruddy morn of boisterous revolt, his noontide of 'obstinate questionings,' his advance into a larger understanding and deeper insight; and so at eventide it shall be light,—not necessarily the eventide of life, but that blessed season of shadowed peace whereof the Lord God and the Lamb are the light.

So one who makes religion the response of his entire personality to Christ finds himself moving in an ampler air. He looks on past history with the eye of his own experience. The knowledge of his own struggle with sin explains the dark pages which have formerly filled him with bitterness. The triumphs in which he rejoices to trace no common grace preclude his finding miracle an

obstacle to faith. The necessity which he has himself been under of revising his earlier impressions reveals the pressure brought to bear by heresy on the formulating function of the Church. The extent to which he feels the inadequacy of his own soul's utterance prepares him for a corresponding inadequacy in the symbolic language of creed. However acutely he may feel the difference between the dialectic of the fourth century and that of the twentieth, a common tongue still unites him to the former in the elementary facts of penitence and sacrifice and love. In what he once spurned as the 'crudities' of Psalmist and Prophet he now recognises beneath the infancy of thought a measureless maturity of faith. He looks with astonishment at the time when he sought his own ends and wishes and opinions, when he admired what the world reckons individuality and achievement. And at such times as the old desires revisit him, he finds the symbol of Calvary omnipotent. The streaming wounds, the face whereon anguish and obedience reign enthroned, recall him to the joy the Redeemer set before Him when He said 'Not My will but Thine be done.' He has but one regret, but one alloy in the sweetness of the cup of service: it is sorrow for those who go about seeking a 'new religion.'

And the relief which comes of this respite from the constant fret and jar of the divided mind!

Is not this the meaning of that reiterated 'peace' which the Saviour pronounced on those who found themselves in Him? His first promise was that of 'rest to your souls.' The prime enablement for all service is here, in the settlement of the soul hitherto storm-tossed and divided. And here too, is that happiness, the instinct for which is surely a guiding star, though no substitute for the haven where we would be. After all, what infinite meaning is there in the old phraseology about 'finding peace!' The Peace of God—the harmony of the powers of the whole man in union with God. Here the quest ceases, but not the progress; the unrest, but not the labour. Old things are passed away; the work of renovation, the endless regeneration, is begun. 'Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit and they are created,' even those that lay in disunion and the semblance of death. 'Come unto Me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you; take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls.'



# APPENDIX

## SOME REGULATIONS FOR THE GUIDANCE OF STUDENTS OF COMPARATIVE RELIGION

### I

FIRST of all, it is important to define the sense in which the term 'Continuity' is used in connection with the history of religion.

By continuity is meant *the presence or manifestation of a principle in all stages of man's history, relating those stages one to another in degrees of advance or deterioration.*

In this definition it will be observed that the idea of a *principle* is given foremost place. This is in order to avoid that loose way of speaking of evolution which is so much in evidence to-day, as though evolution were the *cause* or *producer* of what is evolved.<sup>1</sup> Such a meaning was certainly not intended by those who first employed the term in connection with Natural Science.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Philip Vivian furnishes an example of this fallacy when he says: 'We know that everything as it now exists is the product of evolution.' (*The Churches and Modern Thought*, p. 169.) Hæckel's writings abound in this apotheosis (cf. *Das Welt-Räthsel*, p. 28), and he is severely taken to task by Sir Oliver Lodge in *Life and Matter*, p. 53 f., and chapter x. On the other hand, Christian writers are unnecessarily prejudiced against the term by this abuse of it, cf. Dr. St. Clair Tisdal, *Christianity related to other Faiths*, p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> See Huxley, *Hume*, p. 246.

The process by which any given thing passes through successive stages is not the *cause* of the thing itself. It is a process merely. Take, for example, any organism: what we observe from infancy to maturity is the continuity of a principle of life, passing through a number of changes, which changes continuity relates to one another as they severally promote or retard the development of the organism. The example is, of course, a simple one, but the principle applies equally in the complex field of species and civilisations. In short, what continuity brings before us through long periods of change is the *identity* of the organism under observation. At no stage can either the changes that have been at work, or the continuity that links them one to another, be termed the *cause* of the organism. The cause is contained within the germ, and is conterminous with the continuity of that which is developed from the germ. It is this that makes the French term *transformisme* appear preferable to our own 'evolution,' as conveying more transparently the idea of identity beneath change. As, however, we already possess the term Continuity, free from the pseudo-scientific associations of 'evolution,' we shall confine ourselves to that term as above defined. The simple common sense of this definition will prevent our supposing that to explain the phenomena of religion by continuity means to *explain* religion away. We no more explain it away than, by tracing life backwards from maturity to infancy, we explain away life.

## II

Even supposing it could be shown—as, needless to say, is not the case—that all religion is ultimately reducible to an illusion, there would still remain the



cause of the illusion to reckon with. It is astonishing to find in popular literature, on the one hand a fear and on the other a hope that if religion be analysed and reduced to a few primitive elements the whole thing will evaporate! 'It is surely a great confusion of thought to imagine that the whole inner meaning of some complex product has been exhaustively revealed as soon as the line of its development has been plotted down, and a minute and accurate chart provided of the progressive stages in organisation from beginning to end.'<sup>1</sup> The principle we have to bear in mind is that the tendency of all analysis is towards the enlargement of our ultimate concepts, not to their reduction to a vanishing point.

### III

Next it is important to notice that by continuity is not meant a *single line* of advance. In the history of religion we never meet with constant progress any more than we do in any other department of human history. The term continuity, then, must be held as wide enough to include decadence as well as growth. A simple illustration from the organic world will make this clear. Let us take an imaginary point representing the simplest known form of life. From this we shall draw, first, a horizontal line, answering to the level course taken by some very early forms of life. Then, returning to the same point, we shall draw, at right angles to the horizontal line, another line representing the direction taken by man. But to complete our diagram of life as a whole, we must fill in the right

<sup>1</sup> From an unpublished MS. which the Rev. Canon Joyce, D.D., has kindly allowed the writer to see.

angle formed by these two lines with a number of other lines, each representing the direction taken by some form of life intermediate between man and the protozoa. We thus have a sheaf of lines radiating from a common point, yet all *dispersing* in quite different directions. Such is the conception of the most brilliant thinker of our times, Henri Bergson—that the life-force manifested in the organic world is not one tendency, but a whole sheaf of such.

If, now, we let these lines represent, instead of animal species, forms of the religious consciousness, such as fetishism, totemism, polytheism, &c., and if we further imagine them to be not stationary but moving all the time, encountering one another, sometimes strengthening, sometimes thwarting each other, sometimes merging with a line already traced, sometimes, by avoiding the beaten track, 'striking out a new line' which registers an advance over the rest, we are in possession of a fair idea of the *élan de la vie* of continuity in the religious consciousness. This idea we shall call the Law of Dispersive Progress. It is because of this that, in defining continuity, we have spoken of it as covering stages of deterioration as well as advance.

#### IV

This conception will rule out any such crude notions as that 'gods' were developed out of fetishes, prayer out of spell, religion itself out of magic. These and similar fallacies seem still to exercise the popular imagination, though in technical quarters they have long since been discredited. Modern anthropology is on its guard against the premature attempt to force derivations which disfigured so much of its earlier

work. Thus, Professor Farnell confesses to a tendency in the past to 'ignore the great diversity actually observable amongst existing primitive societies.' 'We have come to beware,' he says, 'of the excesses of students of totemism, and have found reason for rejecting the belief that all gods arose as ghosts of departed ancestors,'—a belief which, under Spencer, was one line along which the old passion for unification proceeded. Just as our imaginary diagram shows us the organic world achieving advance, not so much by passing through stages as by avoiding them,<sup>1</sup> so we find Professor Farnell admitting 'the possibility that some of the higher peoples have been able to proceed on their path of religious progress by avoiding particular detrimental institutions.'<sup>2</sup>

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## V

Again, we must not expect lower or more primitive forms of religion to present all the features subsequently produced. In our inclusion of any cult into the class of 'religion,' we shall be guided, not by the presence of customs, rites, beliefs, common to all religions, but by the presence, or absence, of a *principle* manifesting itself in all stages. The notion which obtained brief currency not long ago, that there were certain tribes without any idea of religion whatever, was due to the application of an arbitrary standard derived from

<sup>1</sup> Thus, for example, we shall find the Jewish religion represented by one of the lines between the vertical and the horizontal, and not far from the vertical. While it had inter-relations with almost all other lines from the horizontal upwards, it remained unprogressive, because it had encountered what Professor Farnell calls a 'detrimental institution,' viz. that of Ethics.

<sup>2</sup> *The Evolution of Religion* (1905), pp. 8, 12.

acquaintance with its more complex forms.<sup>1</sup> Certainly we do not look to find the features of the man in the face of the babe. To expect a primitive form of religion to yield ideas of God, prayer, and sacrifice as we now know them, and to exclude from the general concept of religion such forms as do not yield them, would do violence to every known law of classification. It is sufficient that the *capacity* for whatever is found in more advanced stages must have existed in the earlier. The same point which radiates the lower lines projects also the higher. In framing, then, a definition of religion, we must not be content till we have found a concept sufficiently general to include the most elementary forms.

## VI

But there is a counterpart to the above principle: for, while we do not exclude obscure forms, we shall guard against the opposite error of restricting the idea of religion to its primitive expression. It by no means follows that because religion *can* be reduced to its lowest terms, an adequate definition of religion can be built up of those terms only. We do not define man in terms of the embryo, nor organic life in terms of the protozoa. It is the grown man who first shows us what was latent in both. Similarly, the significance of primitive forms of religion is only fully apparent in the light thrown back upon them by what has arisen out of them.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Roskoff's famous reply to the late Lord Avebury (Sir John Lubbock), *Das Religionswesen der rohesten Naturvölker*, 1880; also Max Müller, *Natural Religion*, pp. 510-18.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Principal Caird, *Evolution in Religion*, i. 46 ff.

## VII

Serious hindrance to the understanding of religion has arisen by reading into its earlier phases later and decadent phases. For instance, the application of the Commercial, or Bribe theory of Sacrifice to races that existed before commerce in its most elementary sense was known, has caused much confusion. The work of those who have written from the standpoint of social evolution, including almost the whole of the Positivist school, has suffered from this anachronism. No doubt in certain phases of man's religious history offerings came to be regarded as gifts for the purpose of bribing the gods, but it is now an established fact that in the earliest religious ritual offerings were purely symbolic of the community's desire to do what was pleasing to their god.<sup>1</sup> There were also other features of even greater importance than offerings, which were thrown out of focus by the Bribe theory. It is therefore entirely gratuitous to assume that primitive sacrifice was a kind of insurance business, and that out of such a self-regarding motive all subsequent expressions of sacrifice have arisen. This is only one of the many ways in which the critical methods of Huxley, Laing, and Häckel have proved to be pre-scientific. It is 'criticism' of that early type which, as Jowett says, 'consists almost entirely in adapting the past to the present, and obtruding the notions of a later age upon an earlier one.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> De la Saussaye, *Manual of the Science of Religion*, pp. 141 ff. See also Jacob Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, i. 186, and Brinton, *Religions of Primitive Peoples*, p. 186.

<sup>2</sup> The celebrated view of Dr. Frazer, which derived religion from magic, comes under this head. Needless to say it is of a

## VIII

The attribution of prayer to spell is another instance of this anachronism. In one of the London parks the author recently listened to an exposition of this kind. The speaker maintained—he did not attempt to prove—that there was a time when prayer was unknown—this for the curious reason that language was insufficiently developed! As soon as adequate language was forthcoming, spells gave place to words, and so prayer was introduced! In his ingenuity the lecturer ignored the facts—first, that spells have continued to exist side by side with ‘developed’ language, and second, that prayer and spell are entirely different things. A spell is an action, or, sometimes, *pace* the lecturer—a form of words, which is supposed to be effective because of the power resident *in it*. On the other hand, a prayer is an appeal to a personal power altogether independent of the petitioner. Both alike are related to a common desire. If the lecturer had employed his gifts in expounding that desire he would have been doing his audience a real service.

Another popular example of the same fallacy is seen in the epigram launched by a well-known writer a few years back, to the effect that God created man in His own image, and man immediately returned the compliment. It is quite false to the facts to imagine,

different character from some of the illustrations given below, and it would be impossible to deal with it in the brief space of an appendix. This, however, is rendered unnecessary by the fact that the late Mr. Andrew Lang and other scholars have shown good ground for rejecting the theory, which is now abandoned. See Lang, *Religion and Magic*; Galloway, *Studies in the Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 120 ff., and F. B. Jevons, *Introduction to the Science of Religion*, pp. 70–104.

with the author of that epigram, that man at first pictured his God in the likeness of himself. Anthropomorphism, in the crude sense of the term, did not enter into religious history until a comparatively late date. Dr. Jevons tells us that 'though in the animistic stage all powers are conceived by man as being persons, they are not all conceived as having human form; they may be animals, birds, trees, clouds, streams, the wind, the earthquake, or the fire.'<sup>1</sup> Reville says: 'The root idea pervading early religions is that of power, power vaguely apprehended but immanent, and as yet unclothed with attributes.'<sup>2</sup> With this agree De la Saussaye, Pfeiderer, and Galloway. Only in systems of polytheism does man 'return the compliment,' and it is now not open to doubt that in all races polytheism has been a decadent, or at least detrimental phase, supervening upon more spiritual ones, in times favourable to ethical expansion, but unfavourable to the expression of the religious consciousness.

## IX

Professor Farnell puts us on our guard against 'accepting too rashly the fact of resemblance for proof of actual origin,' i.e. derivation.<sup>3</sup> We need to bear this in mind when examining those parallelisms between Christianity and the ethnic faiths to which attention is so frequently drawn to-day. Because two things are alike it does not follow that one of them is copied from the other. A common design may account for

<sup>1</sup> *The Idea of God in Early Religions*, p. 17; cf. pp. 83-5.

<sup>2</sup> *Religions des peuples non cultists*, ii. 225.

<sup>3</sup> *The Evolution of Religion*, p. 59.

the resemblance. This may sound like the merest truism, yet it is no exaggeration to say that nothing has done more harm to the science of religion, as well as to the cause of religion itself, than the superficiality of novelists and magazine writers when dealing with this subject. Attention has probably been sufficiently drawn to this in the text,<sup>1</sup> yet no attempt to formulate guiding principles would be complete that did not warn the general reader against them. Nothing so serves to give an appearance of learning as a depreciation of Christianity on the score of certain resemblances in other forms of religion. The very fact that Christianity has been regarded as a privileged institution, and that the spirit of revolt is in the air, contributes to this practice. And let it be noted that writers who indulge in this superficial appearance of learning never do so in order to lift other religions up to the level of a final response, but always to try to drag down Christianity to the level of what they know their readers regard as superstition. The readers, for the most part, have little opportunity for verifying the alleged resemblances which serve the authors' fancy. Altogether, a more facile, and at the same time more cowardly, attack on religion as known amongst us does not exist. The words of a recent reviewer deserve to be quoted again and again: 'Any research which tends to throw light on the character of the rivals of early Hebrew and Christian systems is to be welcomed. Neither the cause of truth or religion will suffer ultimately from these inquiries. But a deliberate and violent dislocation of religious history to discredit one phase of it is as silly as it is irresponsible.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See above, iii. § 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Church Quarterly Review*, April 1908. Konrad Lübeck,



By keeping in view our definition of continuity we shall understand the true significance of resemblances, as being all related to a common origin in various stages of advance and deterioration, just as the various species by which we are surrounded are not derived from one another, but are related by a common ancestry to the supreme and abiding fact of life.

## X

The above principles may now be briefly recapitulated : first, defining Continuity as the presence of a principle in all stages of history, relating those stages one to another in degrees of advance or decline, we find that instead of religion being 'explained away,' its ultimate cause in the consciousness of God and desire for union with Him becomes clearer the further we

in his ingenious onslaught on Wünsch's theory of the Maltese Spring Festival, gives a list of some of what he considers to be the wilder exaggerations in this direction. Thus, the worship of the Blessed Virgin is said to be the survival of the cult of Venus and Astarte; the service of the Roman Catholic Church is identical with the cult of Nimrod and Semiramis; Jesus is the Israelitish Gilgamish; the history and the birth of Jesus and the adoration of the magi are said to be derived from the Mithraic religion, which also, it appears, provided the sacraments of Baptism and Penance, and the Holy Eucharist to the sorely impoverished Church! The doctrine of guardian angels is similarly derived from the Græco-Roman cult of the Genius, and the heathen practice of veneration in temples was taken over and continued by the Church. We have no desire to be identified with the worship of the Blessed Virgin, and indeed would repudiate heart and soul that exaggeration of true Catholic veneration, but the attempt to refer it in its origin to the cult of Venus and Astarte is an apt example of the amazing fertility of Modernist resource. Nothing at all resembling excessive devotion to the Blessed Virgin was known in the Catholic Church until comparatively modern times.

trace our ancestry. We find, however, instead of a single line of advance, a dispersive progress, extremely complex, and abounding with residuary types and detrimental institutions. In our task of definition we shall avoid framing such an idea of religion as would exclude primitive forms, since we cannot expect the lower stages to present the entire content ultimately produced. Nor, on the other hand, shall we restrict the idea of religion to these lower expressions. Further, we shall not obtrude the notions of a later stage upon an earlier, and we shall not accept mere resemblance as proof of derivation.

To these principles it is perhaps necessary to add one further observation, viz. that continuity is concerned solely with continuity—that is to say, it has nothing to do with religious values. The science of religion cannot logically deny or dispute any personal value which religion may possess for the student, or for those whose systems he is studying. It is simply concerned with ascertaining and comparing the ideas which various races have had of their gods and worship, and with tracing the continuity of the religious idea.

# INDEX

- ADONIS, death of, 61  
 Age, eclectic character of the, 9; temper of the, and instinct, 7  
 Allen, Grant, 44  
 Animism, Jevons on, 286 n.; Reville on, 287  
 Anselm, on the Atonement, 177  
 Anthropological Institute, Journal of the, 32  
 Anthropology, early tendencies of, 58; corrected, 63; Christian interpretation of, 88 f.  
 Anthropomorphism, an analogical term, 103; late appearance of, 287; an opprobrious epithet, 102; and personality, 102; and polytheism, 102  
 Apollo, worship of, 15  
 Apostles, their presentment of Christ, 135 f.; true to Christ's method, 106, 210  
 Approach, instinct of, 37; explained in Christ, 173; and intellectual advance, 39  
 Aquinas, St. Thomas, on miracle, 132  
 Arianism, 254  
 Arnold, Matthew, 177  
 Assyria and Babylonia, 15  
 Athanasius, on the Atonement, 177; Creed of, 249  
 Augustine, St., on the Atonement, 177; on miracle, 131  
 Aural and spiritual deficiency, analogy between, 140 f.  
 Australia, tribes of Central, 32; of South and East, 40  
 Avatâras, and Vishnu, 67  
 BABYLONIA, religion of, anti-social, 15  
 Bagot, Richard, *My Italian Year*, 59; false parallelisms of, 61, 62, 66 f.  
 Bergson, 124; on dispersive progress, 282  
 Bigg, Dr., *Church and Roman Empire*, 100  
 Brahminism, 33  
 Bribe theory of Sacrifice, 285  
 Brinton, *Religion of Primitive Peoples*, 285 n.  
 Browning, 265  
 Buddha, the Persian, 68; Buddha tradition, 69  
 Buddhism, South and North, contrasted, 32 f.  
 Budge, Dr., *History of Egypt*, 75  
 Butler, *Analogy*, 41  
 CAIRD, Edward, on primitive expression of religion, 45; definition of religion, 47; early religion measured by subsequent development, 284  
 Calculable and mechanical, distinction between the, 124

- Carlyle, on the Church, 236 ;  
the Homo-ousion, 250
- Cassady, James, *Father Paul*,  
241
- Causation, instinct of, and  
religious instinct, 36
- Chandler, Bishop, definition of  
religion, 47
- Chesterton, on Christian  
History, 202
- Chinese parthenogenesis, 69
- Chota Nagpur, jungle dwellers  
of, 38
- Christ, aim of, 208 ; and  
analogical method, 103 ;  
Apostles' presentment of,  
135 ; assimilative work of,  
55 ; austerity of, 210 ;  
crucifixion of, its implica-  
tion for the race, 150 ;  
Divine consciousness of, and  
the creed, 253 ; exclusive-  
ness of, 241 ; and personal  
evil, 153 f. ; the historic  
and mystic, 197 ; the  
humanitarian, 134, 180 ; and  
Judaism, 78 ; method of,  
209 ; Himself the Miracle,  
130 ; and personality,  
106 ff. ; revealer of the  
positive law, 187 ; His reve-  
lation vital, 88, 90, 101 ;  
spiritual state of man at  
His coming, 99 f. ; St.  
Gregory Nyssen on the re-  
presentative nature of, 172 ;  
not the supreme Teacher  
only, 201 ; modern ten-  
dency to concentrate on  
teaching of, 106 f.
- Christ's appeal to the free  
human choice, 219 ; to  
men to centre themselves in  
Him, 193 ; death, sacrifice  
of, 190 ; and eternal values,  
191 ; and that of Socrates,  
181 ; diagnosis of the race,  
220 ; influence, to what due,  
274 ; life, a sacrifice, 188 f. ;  
method, possible conse-  
quences of, 211 ; moral stan-  
dard, transcendent, 219 f. ;  
revelation and the creed,  
alleged contrast between,  
252 ; sacrifice, practical  
application of, 193 ; not  
a substitution merely, 192
- Christian character, inconsis-  
tency of, 203 ; determinists,  
50 ff. ; revolt from, 51 ;  
life, mystic and historic,  
197 ; history and character,  
summary on, 232 f. ; history,  
and the older apologetic,  
204 f. ; naturalistic infer-  
ence from, 205 ; testimony  
to Christ's insight, 212 ;  
missions, 57 n.
- Christianity, and anthro-  
pology, 88 f. ; claim of, 82 ;  
exclusive as well as inclu-  
sive, 236 f. ; fundamentally  
social, 242 ; historic, but  
more, 194 ; incomplete here,  
221 ; influence on modern  
thought, 218 ; interpretive  
function of, 81 ; modern  
rivals, 212 f. ; its reaction  
on the moral consciousness,  
16 ; selective function of,  
56 ff. ; slow progress of,  
225 ; a vital process, 265 f.
- Chuang-tse, on death, 72
- Church, the, visible, 203 ; a  
response to Christ, 242
- Church, Dean, 161
- Church Quarterly*, 63
- Church Times*, 65
- Clare, Maurice, on Christian  
progress, 202 ; on Christ's  
sacrifice, 172
- Classification, problem of  
religious, 48 ff.
- Coercion, alien to Christ's  
method, 209
- Coleridge, 17
- Colquhoun, *Among the Shans*,  
39 n.

- Comparative religion, and personal values, 290; summary of guiding principles in, 289  
 'Comprehensiveness,' detrimental, 245  
 Comte, exclusiveness of, 240  
 Consciousness of God, man's, 31  
 Consistency, moral, 220  
 Continuity, definition of, 279 f.; and dispersive progress, 280  
 Covenant of Jews, in light of natural selection, 93  
 Crawley, Ernest, on the continuance of the religious impulse, 20; on fetishism, 34; on Frazer's definition of religion, 40; the *Mystic Rose*, 39; on propitiation in Christian doctrine, 41; varieties of propitiation, 72  
 Creed, and changing conceptions, 247; the conservator of revelation, 255; the intellectual character of, 251, 254; and language, 250 f.; place in worship, 256; prejudice against, 246; a register of revelation, 252; how far final, 247  
 Criticism of Christianity, inspired by Christianity, 236  
 Cross, problem of the, 137, 150  
 Crudity of doctrinal statements, 177 f.  
 Cry of the hour, the, 1; how related to the original religious impulse, 82
- DAHOMANS, 40  
 Definitions of religion, modern, 47 f.  
 De la Saussaye, 88  
 Determinism, Christian, 161 f.; revolt from, 164  
 Detrimental institutions, 80  
 Dickenson, Mr. Lowes, 139
- Differences between Christianity and ethnic religions, 76 ff.  
 Differentiation and classification, 81  
 Difficulties, religious, and the pulpit, 273  
 Dionysios, worship of, 15  
 Discipline, Christian, 259; prejudice against, 258  
 Dispersive progress, law of, 282  
 Divine consciousness of Christ as expressed in doctrine, 249  
 Doctrine, approximate nature of, 249  
 Dorner, 51  
 Drew, Professor, *Die Christumvthe*, 135  
 Du Bose, on personal revelation, 105
- EDDA, the, 72  
 Education, supposed rivalry with religion, 215  
 Efficiency, moral, and religion, 12  
 Egyptian origin of doctrine of the Trinity, alleged, 71  
 Elements of the religious consciousness, 31, 35, 42  
 Emerson, 227  
 Eostre and Easter, 62  
 Estrangement, 147  
 'Eternal Fact,' Spencer on the, 26, 42  
 Ethical estimate of religion, 12; origin of sectarianism, 227; and physical welfare, 10  
 Ethics and moral pedantry, 274; and sterility, 14; and religion not identical, 12; indebtedness of religion to, 16; no substitute for religion, 17  
 Ethnic Scriptures, Farquhar on the, 95  
 Eucharist, emblematic aspect of the, 200

- Evil, Christ's conception of, 153 f.; educative theory of, 162; moral effect of impersonal views of, 156; and persistence of personality, 152; and telepathic phenomena, 152
- Evolution, fallacious notions of, 44; a method not a cause, 279; and 'upward tendency,' 158
- Exclusiveness, historic function of, 240; principle of, 238; and unity, 240 f., 244
- Exiles, allegory of the, 182 ff.
- Expectancy, instinct of, distinct from inference, 34
- FACT, and doctrine, relation between, in creed, 248; fact of sin, apart from doctrine, 145
- Faculty, the religious, old theory of, 28 f.
- Faith, its function in salvation, 196; and in ordinary life, 195; summary of the Christian, 260 ff.; its process, 275; not a repudiation of intelligence, 268; not a return to the past, 267; venture of, needed to-day, 266 f.
- Fall, and its consequences, 186; difficulty of the, 156; and Hebrew tradition, 159; and evolution, 157 f.; popular exaggeration of effects of, 156; Pauline language on the, 160 and *n.*
- Farnell, L. R., on detrimental institutions, 78, 283; diversity among primitive societies, 282; *Greece and Babylonia*, 15 *n.*; parallelism not derivation, 287; reaction against false parallels, 63; on requisites for criticism, 63, 68
- Farquhar, J. W., ethnic Scriptures, 95; religious ordinances, 244; revelation conditioned, 84
- Fetishism, symbolic, 34
- Figgis, Dr., criterion of classification criticised, 49; devotional use of the Bible, 270; personality and belief, 268; on the problem of classification, 49; the world and the universe, 110
- Fijians, propitiation amongst, 40
- Fison and Howitt, 40
- Force in life, religion recognised as a, 6
- Frazer, Dr., *Golden Bough*, 56 *n.*; on propitiation, 39 f., 173; on religion and magic, 286 *n.*
- Freedom, human, not inconsistent with Divine Power, 212; implications of Christ's appeal to, 211
- GALLOWAY, Professor G., *Principles of Religious Development*, 13, 15, 17, 51, 53, 244, 286 *n.*, 287
- Georgievski, *Pervuiy Period Kitayskoy Istorii*, 69
- Ghost theory, discredited, 283
- Giles, Professor, pagan and Christian parallels, 69
- Gillen, Spencer and, 32
- God, consciousness of and desire for the two elements common to all forms of religion, 31 ff.
- Gore, Dr., on intellectual life of religion, 268
- Gregory Nyssen, St., 172
- Grimm, Jacob, 285 *n.*
- Gubernatus, Angelo di, on alleged derivative origin of the Trinity, 70
- Guizot, on institutional religion, 236

- HÄCKEL, Sir Oliver Lodge on, 279 n.
- Harlez, de, the Buddha legends, 69; the Puranic Trinities, 70
- Harrison, Frederic, *Creed of a Layman*, 1, 40
- Harrison, Miss J. E., worship of Apollo, 15
- Healing, by suggestion, and miracle, 114 f., 122
- Health, analogy between physical and spiritual, 168, 258
- Hebrew religion, place among world religions, 93, 95 n.; Scriptures, not a fetish, 95; Prophetism, 50
- History, Christian, summary of, 232 f.; difficulties of, chiefly psychological, 228; foretold by Christ, 224; and the older apologetic, 203; the paradox of, 203, 207 f.
- Hobhouse, L. T., *Morals and Evolution*, 12
- Howitt, 32
- Höfding, non-ethical significance of low stages of religion, 15
- Hügel, Baron von, on the three modalities, 269
- Humanitarian ideal, futuring of the, 223
- Huxley, meaning of evolution, 279 n.; on natural law, 118; *Science and Hebrew Tradition*, 39 n.
- ILLINGWORTH, on miracle, 133
- Impulse, the original religious, and classification, 81; and Christianity, 78
- Incredibility and incredulity, 175
- Industrial progress in nineteenth century, effects of, 3
- Inge, Dr., ethics and physical welfare, 10; on prayer, 106
- Instinct, of approach in primitive man, 37 f.; explained in the Sacrifice of Christ, 173; and intellectual advance, 39; estimated by subsequent development, 44, 284; external stimuli of the, 34 f.; interpretation of the, 52; non-intellectual character of the, 31; instances of perversion of, 7; and moral responsibility, 164; object of the, 31 f.; and response, interval between, 90, 137; its explanation, 140, 149; at work in Redemption, 197
- Institutional religion, 237
- Interpretation, the clue to response, 86 f.; one with response, 88
- Interpreter, Christianity the, 72, 74
- Interpretive type of religion, essentials of an, 53
- Isis and Horus, 69
- JACOLLIOT, M., *La Bible dans l'Inde*, 69
- James, William, 39; definition of religion, 48
- Jennings, *Shi King*, 69
- Jerome, St., and Terebinthus, 67 f.
- Jevons, Dr., on anthropomorphism, 287, 286 n.; fetishism, 34; forms of propitiation, 73
- Jews, compared with Greeks, &c., as a 'favoured race,' 93
- Jowett, B., on false criticism, 285
- Joyce, Dr., development and 'explanation,' 87; evolution, 281; religious origins, 84; Hebrew Prophetism,

- 95; inspiration of prophecy, 96; prophetic audition, 91; St. Paul's references to the Fall, 160 *n.*
- Judaism and Christianity, 56 *f.*; a terminal type, 78, 283 *n.*
- Justice, and the consequences of the Fall, 186 *f.*; and reconciliation, 185; and the Sacrifice of Christ, 192
- KENNEDY, Professor H. A. A., on the Mystery Religions, 75
- Kurnai Tribes, 40
- LANG, Andrew, 40 *n.*; 286 *n.*
- Language and religion, analogy between, 21
- Law, natural, Huxley on, 118; and force, 118
- Law, the moral, and sin, 147
- Liddon on mystic sense of Christian fact, 172, 194
- Lightfoot, on personal evil, 154 *n.*
- Literary religions, and dawn of personality, 91
- Lodge, Sir Oliver, alternative conceptions of the universe, 125; on Häckel, 279 *n.*; persistence of personality, 151
- Lotze, on personality, 102
- Lowell, J. R., on Creed, 236
- 'Lower goodness,' Tyrrell on the, 226
- Lübeck, Konrad, on false parallels, 288 *n.*
- 'Lucas Malet,' on expiation, 72
- Luthardt, 28
- McDOUGAL, *Body and Mind*, 110
- Maclean, *Kaffir Laws*, 39 *n.*
- Man, part of a vaster society, 135 *f.*
- Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*, 69, 71
- Mechanical Deism, 133
- Mechanical order of nature, criticism of, 120 *f.*; and the calculable, distinction between, 124
- Messianic expectation of the Jews, 22
- Mexican origin of Eucharist, alleged, 73
- Mill, J. S., and the Christian standard, 18
- Miracle, defined by St. Augustine, 131; by St. Thomas Aquinas, 132; in Murray's Dictionary, 111, 128, 134; as defined here, 128; older and modern conceptions contrasted, 111; in relation to knowledge, 112; and the 'order of nature,' 113; and healing by suggestion, 114 *f.*; related to states of being not to formulæ, 128; value of, as evidence, 129; of response in Christ, 134; and sin, 149; personal conception of, not new, 131
- Miracles of Christ, the, 130; together with other facts about Him, 109
- Miraculous, Christ and the, 108
- Missions, Christian, 58 *n.*
- Modern thought, impregnated with Christianity, 218
- Modernist tendencies, 269 *ff.*
- Monopolist school, the, 54 *ff.*; futility of the, 54 *f.*, 97; reaction against the, 59 *ff.*
- Moral standard, no longer unanimity as to a, 17, 166
- Morbidity of sense of sin, alleged, 168
- Morrison, Cotter, on exclusiveness of Positivism, 241
- Morrison, G. H., on sin, 139



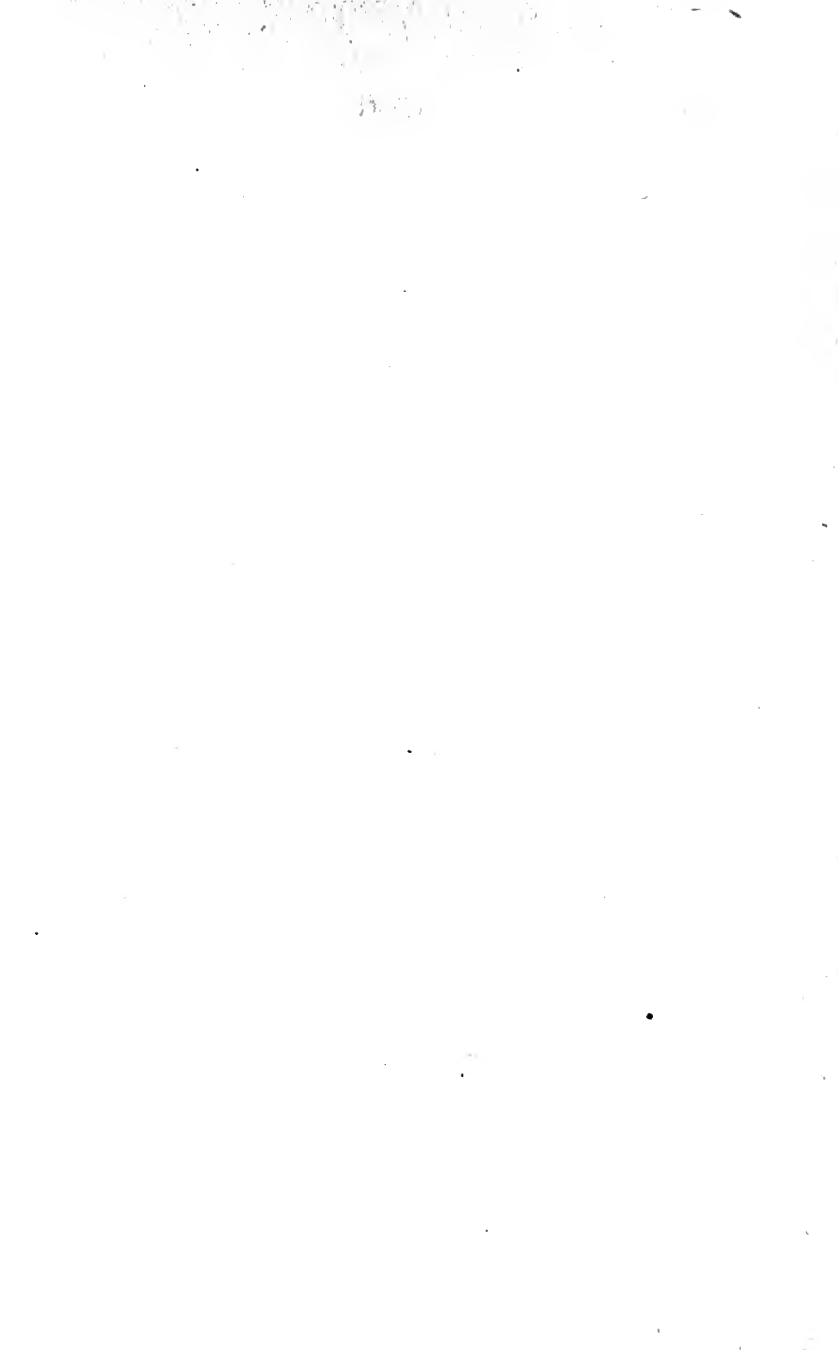
- Müller, Max, *Natural Religion*, 284 n.; on study of comparative religion in missionary colleges, 33
- Murray, Dr. Farquhar, on Hume, 112; on Huxley's attitude to miracle, 116
- Murray's Dictionary, and miracle, 111, 128, 134
- NATURAL selection of Response, the, 93
- Naturalism, 216 f.
- Naturalistic account of sin, refutation of, 169
- Nature allegories, in ethnic religions, 75; order of, and miracle, 113
- Neale, Dr., J. M., 199
- New Religion, breakdown of need for, 233, 266
- New Theology, significance of the, 50
- Nietzsche, modern vogue of, 19; and altruism, 52, 165
- Nineteenth century, traits of the, 10; ethical influence of, 6
- Non-religious philanthropy, tendency of, 213
- Novelty as a criterion of religion, 4
- OBJECT of the religious consciousness, 31 ff.
- Order of nature, and allied terms, 165; as formerly used, 117; and natural law, 118; not absolutely calculable, 124 ff.; its personal nature, 127
- Organic conceptions of revelation, 97; not new, 96; and pantheism, 97
- Original impulse of religion, Christianity and the, 81
- Originality and novelty, 274
- Osiris, Isis, and Horus, 71
- Ovid and St. Paul, 148
- PALEY, and order of nature, 116
- Parable of the Fall, the Hebrew, 159
- Paradox of Christian History, 203 ff.
- Parallelism no plagiarism, 61; Professor Farnell on, 63; in the light of Jewish types, 64; true significance of, 64 ff.
- Paul, St., and nature-worship, 75 f.
- Pauline use of the First and Second Adam, 160 n.
- Penitence, true recognition of, 168
- Persian Samanas, 68
- Personal agency of evil, 151 ff.; equation in miracle, 121 f.; God, not derived from idea of human personality, 101
- Personality, dawn of, in the literary religions, 91; goal of the religious impulse, 98 ff.; idea of, due to Christ, 161; in St. Paul's Epistles, 101
- Pfleiderer, on religion, 47, 287
- Pharisees and Sadducees, modern, 274
- Phillips, Mr. Stephen, *Christ in Hades*, 230
- Poincaré, Professor Henri, 127
- Polytheism, and Anthropomorphism, 102, 286
- Positivism, 40
- Positivist school of comparative religion, 285
- Prayer, Christ's teaching about, and the Trinity, 252 f.; Dr. Inge on, 106; and spell, 286
- Present day, eclectic character of, 9

- Primitive religion, and subsequent progress, 283
- Problem of the Cross, the, 137
- Prophetic audition, 91
- Propitiation, importance of, 39 f., 173; and the instinct of approach, 39 ff.
- Psychology, fallacy of the older abstract, 29; science of religion and, 27 f.
- Psychological difficulties of Christian history, 228
- Pulpit, present day, 273
- RA, incarnations of, 66 f.
- Reconciliation, Augustine, Athanasius, and Anselm on, 177; allegory of, 182 ff.; arraignment of, modern, 175, 177; cost of, 188, 190 f.; commencement of life in Christ, 194; erroneous ideas of, 176 f.; essentials of doctrine of, 179, 191; and Justice, 189; Origen on, 177; universal instinct, 173
- Redemption, and freedom, 197; human and Divine sides of, 196; instinct and response at work in, 199
- Religion, as here understood, 43 f.; classification of types of, 48 ff.; comparative, growth of, 27 f.; regulations for the study of, 279; continuance of, threatened, 20; cry for a new, 1 ff.; significance of, 21; definable in terms of highest concepts, 44; definitions of, 47; elements common to all forms of, 31, 43; ethical estimate of, 12; and ethics, 12; not identical with ethics, 12; practical relation to ethics, 11, 16; final definition of, 202; force in life, 6; sometimes hostile to progress, 15; not independent of intelligence, 268; institutional, 237; integral part of life, 266; interpretive types of, 53; its own end, 16, 20, 80; and language, 21; one not many, 46; paramount need of understanding, 25; science of, a modern development, 9; study of, inadequacy of older methods of, 27 f.; false tendency to simplify, 179; and tendencies of the time, 2; transition periods in, 49 f.
- Religious difficulties, public treatment of, 272; teaching, present, 270; tendencies, present, 269 ff.
- Renan, tribute to Christ, 189
- Response, completion in sacrifice, 198 f.; Divine, miraculous character of, 108, 134; and instinct, interval between, 90, 137; explained, 140, 149 f., 170; natural selection of, 91; one with interpretation, 85; personal and didactic aspects of, 91
- Restoration, incomplete in this life, 221
- Resurrection, evidential value of, 129, 136; Zoroastrian, 72
- Reville, on animism, 287
- Righteousness, and consistency, 220
- Rivals of Christianity, 212 f.
- Romanes, G. J., on Judaism, 78
- Roskoff, reply to Lord Avebury, 284 n.
- Rowland, Dr. Norman, on personality, 100 f.; essentials of Christ's revelation, 104

- SABATIER, 46; on the object of Christ, 79
- Sacramental life in Christ, the, 197 f.
- Sacrifice, the completion of response, 198; of the believer, 200
- Sacrifice of Christ, alleged incredibility of, 174; and Justice, 192
- Sacrifices, human, 15
- Sacrificial meal, the, 73
- Salvation, a life, 195
- Saussaye, de la, 285 n., 287
- Saviours, ethnic, 74
- Schura, M. Edmond, 69
- Science of religion, 27 ff.; fascination of history of, 29; its modern aids, 30
- Scriptures, the Hebrew, 95
- Sectarianism, ethical origin of, 227
- Selective function of Christianity, 78
- Self-development, no ground of moral appeal, 165
- Shinto ritual, 46
- Sienkiewicz, 51
- Sin, all aspects covered by Christian doctrine of, 143 f.; assumed in teaching of Christ, 141 f.; belongs to the spiritual order, 170; and dawn of personality, 146; a fact as well as a doctrine, 145; and miracle, 149; its place in modern conceptions, 142; modern theories of, 143; necessity for, fallacy of theory, 163; non-Christian explanations of, 143; non-ethical character of, 147; a personal estrangement from God, 150; related to being rather than to law, 149
- Social nature of Christianity, 243; social science and religion, consequence of sun-dering, 214
- Solidarity of the race, 93
- Soul-progress, stages in, 23
- Spectator, The*, on 'verbal display,' 239
- Spencer, Herbert, significance of religion, 26, 42; universality of religious ideas, 26; varieties of religion not illusory, 84
- Splendour of a Great Hope, The*, 74
- Starbuck, Dr., 30
- Stephen, Sir Leslie, 28
- Substitution, sense in which Christ's Death was a, 199
- Suggestion and miracle, 36
- Supernatural element in Christianity, tendency to disregard, 246
- TALBOT, Dr., 57 n.
- Teichmüller, 43
- Tennant, Dr., science and experience, 126 f.
- Terebinthus, and St. Jerome, 68 f.
- Theology, the New, 50
- Theological mind of to-day, character of the, 84
- Thompson, Mr. James, on miracles, 115 f.
- Thornburn, Dr. J., historicity of Christ, 135 n.
- Tisdal, Dr. St. Clair, on virgin-births, 68 f.; on Christianity as related to other faiths, 279
- Transition periods in religion, 49 f.
- Triads, the Egyptian, 71
- Trimûrti, the Indian, 70
- Trinity, doctrine of the, alleged Egyptian origin of the, 71; as revealed by Christ, 252 f.; stated, 70; alleged modern derivation, 70

- Tylor, Dr., on antiquity of Christianity, 53; study of religion, 26; instances of sense of expectancy, 34, 89; *Primitive Culture*, 32, 38, 53, 56
- Types, religious, in the older theological sense, 64
- Tyrrell, on the 'lower goodness,' 226
- ULTIMATE elements of the religious consciousness, 31, 41
- Ultimate questions as to the religious instinct, 35, 42
- Uniformity and natural law, 118
- Uniformity of conduct, misleading tendency of, 227
- Utility value of religion, 11, 208
- VEDAS, transition marked by the, 49
- Venture of Faith, its character, 266 f., 268; its results, 275; is it a begging of the question? 266
- Virgin-birth of the Buddha, origin of legend, 67 f.; Chinese, 69; Egyptian, 69
- Vishnu, incarnations of, 67
- WARD, Professor J., *Gifford Lectures*, 126
- Wesley, 'conversion' of, 267
- Westermarck, *Origin of Moral Ideas*, 12
- Whitman, Walt, 139
- Worship, reticent character of modern, 257
- Wright, Dr. T. H., 110 n.
- Wünsch, Lübeck on, 289 n.
- ZARATHRUSTRA, religion of, 50
- Zoroastrian resurrection, 72
- Zulu tribes, 40

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